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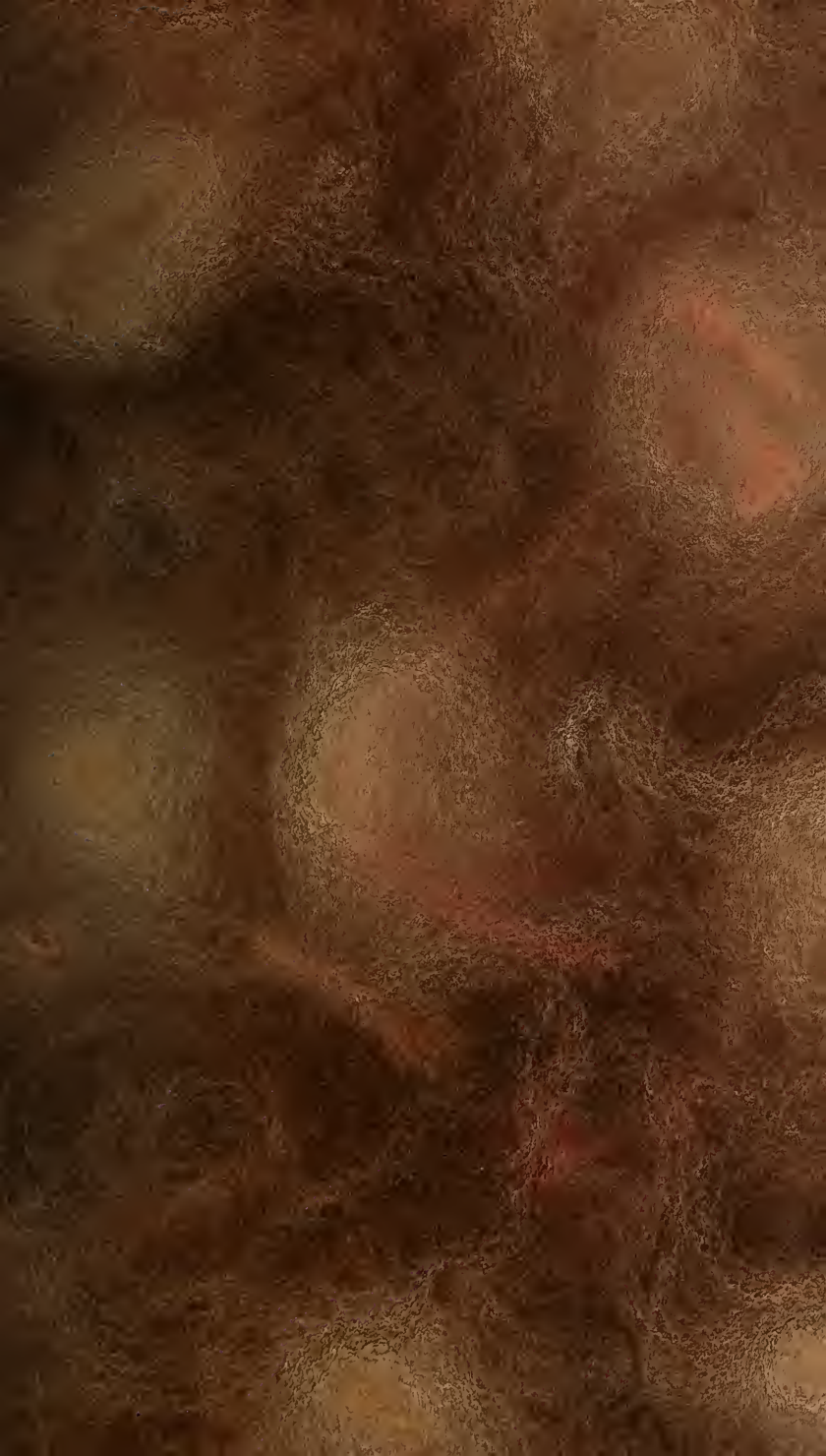

Montezuma Edition

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Montezuma Edition

HISTORY OF THE

Conquest of Mexico

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

EDITED BY

WILFRED HAROLD MUNRO

AND COMPRISING THE NOTES OF THE EDITION BY
JOHN FOSTER KIRK

VOL. II

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

THE MEETING OF CORTÉS AND MONTEZUMA

Page 254

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PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY IN BROWN UNIVERSITY

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"Victrices aquilas alium laturus in orbem"
LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. v., v. 238

VOL. II

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
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BOOK II

DISCOVERY OF MEXICO

(CONTINUED)

CONQUEST OF MEXICO

CHAPTER VI

ACCOUNT OF MONTEZUMA—STATE OF HIS EMPIRE —STRANGE PROGNOSTICS—EMBASSY AND PRESENTS—SPANISH ENCAMPMENT

1519

WE must now take leave of the Spanish camp in the *tierra caliente,* and transport ourselves to the distant capital of Mexico, where no little sensation was excited by the arrival of the wonderful strangers on the coast. The Aztec throne was filled at that time by Montezuma the Second, nephew of the last, and grandson of a preceding monarch. He had been elected to the regal dignity * in 1502, in preference to his brothers, for his superior qualifications both as a soldier and a priest,—a combination of offices sometimes found in the Mexican candidates, as it was more frequently in the Egyptian. In early youth he had taken an active part in the wars of the empire, though of late he had devoted himself more exclusively to the services of the temple; and he

* ["Chief of men."—M.]

was scrupulous in his attentions to all the burdensome ceremonial of the Aztec worship. He maintained a grave and reserved demeanor, speaking little and with prudent deliberation. His deportment was well calculated to inspire ideas of superior sanctity.[1]

When his election was announced to him, he was found sweeping down the stairs in the great temple of the national war-god. He received the messengers with a becoming humility, professing his unfitness for so responsible a station. The address delivered as usual on the occasion was made by his relative Nezahualpilli, the wise king of Tezcuco.[2] It has, fortunately, been preserved, and presents a favorable specimen of Indian eloquence. Towards the conclusion, the orator exclaims, "Who can doubt that the Aztec empire has reached the zenith of its greatness, since the Almighty has placed over it one whose very presence fills every beholder with reverence? Rejoice, happy people, that you have now a sovereign who will be to you a steady column of support; a father in distress, a more than brother in tenderness and sympathy; one whose aspiring soul will disdain all the profligate pleasures of the senses and the wasting indulgence of sloth. And thou, illustrious youth, doubt not that the Creator, who has laid on thee so weighty a charge, will also give

[1] His name suited his nature; Montezuma, according to Las Casas, signifying, in the Mexican, "sad or severe man." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 70.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 20.—Col. de Mendoza, pp. 13–16; Codex Tel.-Rem., p. 143, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.

[2] For a full account of this prince, see Book I, chap. 6.

strength to sustain it; that He, who has been so liberal in times past, will shower yet more abundant blessings on thy head, and keep thee firm in thy royal seat through many long and glorious years." These golden prognostics, which melted the royal auditor into tears, were not destined to be realized.[3]

Montezuma displayed all the energy and enterprise in the commencement of his reign which had been anticipated from him. His first expedition against a rebel province in the neighborhood was crowned with success, and he led back in triumph a throng of captives for the bloody sacrifice that was to grace his coronation. This was celebrated with uncommon pomp. Games and religious ceremonies continued for several days, and among the spectators who flocked from distant quarters were some noble Tlascalans, the hereditary enemies of Mexico. They were in disguise, hoping thus to elude detection. They were recognized, however, and reported to the monarch. But he only availed himself of the information to provide them with honorable entertainment and a good place for witnessing the games. This was a magnanimous act, considering the long-cherished hostility between the nations.

In his first years, Montezuma was constantly engaged in war, and frequently led his armies in person. The Aztec banners were seen in the far-

[3] The address is fully reported by Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 68), who came into the country little more than half a century after its delivery. It has been recently republished by Bustamante. Tezcuco en los últimos Tiempos (México, 1826), pp. 256–258.

thest provinces on the Gulf of Mexico, and the distant regions of Nicaragua and Honduras. The expeditions were generally successful; and the limits of the empire were more widely extended than at any preceding period.

Meanwhile the monarch was not inattentive to the interior concerns of the kingdom. He made some important changes in the courts of justice, and carefully watched over the execution of the laws, which he enforced with stern severity. He was in the habit of patrolling the streets of his capital in disguise, to make himself personally acquainted with the abuses in it. And with more questionable policy, it is said, he would sometimes try the integrity of his judges by tempting them with large bribes to swerve from their duty, and then call the delinquent to strict account for yielding to the temptation.

He liberally recompensed all who served him. He showed a similar munificent spirit in his public works, constructing and embellishing the temples, bringing water into the capital by a new channel, and establishing a hospital, or retreat for invalid soldiers, in the city of Colhuacan.[4]

These acts, so worthy of a great prince, were counterbalanced by others of an opposite complexion. The humility, displayed so ostentatiously before his elevation, gave way to an intolerable arrogance. In his pleasure-houses, domestic establishment, and way of living, he assumed a pomp

[4] Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 22.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, Prólogo, et cap. 1.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 73, 74, 81.—Col. de Mendoza, pp. 14, 85, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.

unknown to his predecessors. He secluded himself from public observation, or, when he went abroad, exacted the most slavish homage; while in the palace he would be served only, even in the most menial offices, by persons of rank. He, further, dismissed several plebeians, chiefly poor soldiers of merit, from the places they had occupied near the person of his predecessor, considering their attendance a dishonor to royalty. It was in vain that his oldest and sagest counsellors remonstrated on a conduct so impolitic.

While he thus disgusted his subjects by his haughty deportment, he alienated their affections by the imposition of grievous taxes. These were demanded by the lavish expenditure of his court. They fell with peculiar heaviness on the conquered cities. This oppression led to frequent insurrection and resistance; and the latter years of his reign present a scene of unintermitting hostility, in which the forces of one half of the empire were employed in suppressing the commotions of the other. Unfortunately, there was no principle of amalgamation by which the new acquisitions could be incorporated into the ancient monarchy as parts of one whole.* Their interests, as well as sympathies, were different. Thus the more widely the Aztec empire was extended, the weaker it became; resembling some vast and ill-proportioned edifice, whose disjointed materials, having no principle of cohesion, and tottering under their own weight, seem ready to fall before the first blast of the tempest.

* [They were held as subject pueblos. See note, p. 23, vol. i.—M.]

In 1516 died the Tezcucan king, Nezahualpilli; in whom Montezuma lost his most sagacious counsellor. The succession was contested by his two sons, Cacama and Ixtlilxochitl. The former was supported by Montezuma. The latter, the younger of the princes, a bold, aspiring youth, appealing to the patriotic sentiment of his nation, would have persuaded them that his brother was too much in the Mexican interests to be true to his own country. A civil war ensued, and ended by a compromise, by which one half of the kingdom, with the capital, remained to Cacama, and the northern portion to his ambitious rival. Ixtlilxochitl became from that time the mortal foe of Montezuma.[5]

A more formidable enemy still was the little republic of Tlascala,* lying midway between the Mexican Valley and the coast. It had maintained its independence for more than two centuries against the allied forces of the empire. Its resources were unimpaired, its civilization scarcely below that of its great rival states, and for courage and military prowess it had established a name inferior to none other of the nations of Anahuac.

Such was the condition of the Aztec monarchy on the arrival of Cortés;—the people disgusted with the arrogance of the sovereign; the provinces and distant cities outraged by fiscal exactions;

[5] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. pp. 267, 274, 275.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 70–76.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 21.

* [Tlascala was not a republic but a pueblo. It was divided into four phratries. Clavigero says (Storia Ant. del Messico, tom. i. p. 155) that it was divided into four parts, each division having its lord.—M.]

while potent enemies in the neighborhood lay watching the hour when they might assail their formidable rival with advantage. Still the kingdom was strong in its internal resources, in the will of its monarch, in the long habitual deference to his authority,—in short, in the terror of his name, and in the valor and discipline of his armies, grown gray in active service, and well drilled in all the tactics of Indian warfare. The time had now come when these imperfect tactics and rude weapons of the barbarian were to be brought into collision with the science and enginery of the most civilized nations of the globe.

During the latter years of his reign, Montezuma had rarely taken part in his military expeditions, which he left to his captains, occupying himself chiefly with his sacerdotal functions. Under no prince had the priesthood enjoyed greater consideration and immunities. The religious festivals and rites were celebrated with unprecedented pomp. The oracles were consulted on the most trivial occasions; and the sanguinary deities were propitiated by hecatombs of victims dragged in triumph to the capital from the conquered or rebellious provinces. The religion, or, to speak correctly, the superstition of Montezuma proved a principal cause of his calamities.

In a preceding chapter I have noticed the popular traditions respecting Quetzalcoatl, that deity with a fair complexion and flowing beard, so unlike the Indian physiognomy, who, after fulfilling his mission of benevolence among the Aztecs, embarked on the Atlantic Sea for the mysterious

shores of Tlapallan.[6] He promised, on his departure, to return at some future day with his posterity, and resume the possession of his empire. That day was looked forward to with hope or with apprehension, according to the interest of the believer, but with general confidence, throughout the wide borders of Anahuac. Even after the Conquest it still lingered among the Indian races, by whom it was as fondly cherished as the advent of their king Sebastian continued to be by the Portuguese, or that of the Messiah by the Jews.[7]

A general feeling seems to have prevailed in the time of Montezuma that the period for the return of the deity and the full accomplishment of his promise was near at hand. This conviction is said to have gained ground from various preternatural occurrences, reported with more or less detail by all the most ancient historians.[8] In 1510 the great lake of Tezcuco, without the occurrence of a tempest, or earthquake, or any other visible cause, became violently agitated, overflowed its banks, and, pouring into the streets of Mexico, swept off many of the buildings by the fury of the waters. In 1511 one of the turrets of the great temple took fire,

[6] *Ante,* Book I, chap. 3, pp. 71, 72, and note 6.

[7] Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 107.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 14; lib. 6, cap. 24.—Codex Vaticanus, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 7.—Ibid., MS., lib. 12, cap. 3, 4.

[8] "Tenia por cierto," says Las Casas of Montezuma, "segun sus prophetas ó agoreros le avian certificado, que su estado é rriquezas y prosperidad avia de perezer dentro de pocos años por çiertas gentes que avian de venir en sus dias, que de su felicidad lo derrocase, y por esto vivia siempre con temor y en tristeça y sobresaltado." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.

equally without any apparent cause, and continued to burn in defiance of all attempts to extinguish it. In the following years, three comets were seen; and not long before the coming of the Spaniards a strange light broke forth in the east. It spread broad at its base on the horizon, and rising in a pyramidal form tapered off as it approached the zenith. It resembled a vast sheet or flood of fire, emitting sparkles, or, as an old writer expresses it, "seemed thickly powdered with stars."[9] At the same time, low voices were heard in the air, and doleful wailings, as if to announce some strange, mysterious calamity! The Aztec monarch, terrified at the apparitions in the heavens, took counsel of Nezahualpilli, who was a great proficient in the subtle science of astrology. But the royal sage cast a deeper cloud over his spirit by reading in these prodigies the speedy downfall of the empire.[10]

Such are the strange stories reported by the chroniclers, in which it is not impossible to detect the glimmerings of truth.[11] Nearly thirty years had elapsed since the discovery of the Islands by

[9] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The Interpreter of the Codex Tel.-Rem. intimates that this scintillating phenomenon was probably nothing more than an eruption of one of the great volcanoes of Mexico. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 144.

[10] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 1.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 23.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 5.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 74.

[11] I omit the most extraordinary miracle of all,—though legal attestations of its truth were furnished the court of Rome (see Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 289),—namely, the resurrection of Montezuma's sister, Papantzin, four days after her burial, to warn the monarch of the approaching ruin of his empire. It finds credit with

Columbus, and more than twenty since his visit to the American continent. Rumors, more or less distinct, of this wonderful appearance of the white men, bearing in their hands the thunder and the lightning, so like in many respects to the traditions of Quetzalcoatl, would naturally spread far and wide among the Indian nations. Such rumors, doubtless, long before the landing of the Spaniards in Mexico, found their way up the grand plateau, filling the minds of men with anticipations of the near coming of the period when the great deity was to return and receive his own again.

In the excited state of their imaginations, prodigies became a familiar occurrence. Or rather, events not very uncommon in themselves, seen through the discolored medium of fear, were easily magnified into prodigies; and the accidental swell of the lake, the appearance of a comet, and the conflagration of a building were all interpreted as the special annunciations of Heaven.[12] Thus it happens in those great political convulsions which shake the foundations of society,—the mighty events that cast their shadows before them in their coming. Then it is that the atmosphere is

one writer, at least, in the nineteenth century! See the note of Sahagun's Mexican editor, Bustamante, Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. ii. p. 270.

[12] Lucan gives a fine enumeration of such prodigies witnessed in the Roman capital in a similar excitement. (Pharsalia, lib. 1, v. 523, et seq.) Poor human nature is much the same everywhere. Machiavelli has thought the subject worthy of a separate chapter in his Discourses. The philosopher even intimates a belief in the existence of beneficent intelligences who send these portents as a sort of *premonitories,* to warn mankind of the coming tempest. Discorsi sopra Tito Livio, lib. 1, cap. 56.

agitated with the low, prophetic murmurs with which Nature, in the moral as in the physical world, announces the march of the hurricane:

> " When from the shores
> And forest-rustling mountains comes a voice,
> That, solemn sounding, bids the world prepare! "

When tidings were brought to the capital of the landing of Grijalva on the coast, in the preceding year, the heart of Montezuma was filled with dismay. He felt as if the destinies which had so long brooded over the royal line of Mexico were to be accomplished, and the sceptre was to pass away from his house forever. Though somewhat relieved by the departure of the Spaniards, he caused sentinels to be stationed on the heights; and, when the Europeans returned under Cortés, he doubtless received the earliest notice of the unwelcome event. It was by his orders, however, that the provincial governor had prepared so hospitable a reception for them. The hieroglyphical report of these strange visitors, now forwarded to the capital, revived all his apprehensions. He called, without delay, a meeting of his principal counsellors, including the kings of Tezcuco and Tlacopan, and laid the matter before them.[13]

There seems to have been much division of opinion in that body. Some were for resisting the strangers at once, whether by fraud or by open

[13] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Idem, Relaciones, MS.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 3, 4.—Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 108.

force. Others contended that, if they were supernatural beings, fraud and force would be alike useless. If they were, as they pretended, ambassadors from a foreign prince, such a policy would be cowardly and unjust. That they were not of the family of Quetzalcoatl was argued from the fact that they had shown themselves hostile to his religion; for tidings of the proceedings of the Spaniards in Tabasco, it seems, had already reached the capital. Among those in favor of giving them a friendly and honorable reception was the Tezcucan king, Cacama.

But Montezuma, taking counsel of his own ill-defined apprehensions, preferred a half-way course,—as usual, the most impolitic. He resolved to send an embassy, with such a magnificent present to the strangers as should impress them with high ideas of his grandeur and resources; while at the same time he would forbid their approach to the capital. This was to reveal at once both his wealth and his weakness.[14]

While the Aztec court was thus agitated by the arrival of the Spaniards, they were passing their time in the *tierra caliente,* not a little annoyed by the excessive heats and suffocating atmosphere of the sandy waste on which they were encamped. They experienced every alleviation that could be derived from the attentions of the friendly natives. These, by the governor's command, had constructed more than a thousand huts or booths of branches and matting, which they occupied in the

[14] Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., loc. cit.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.

CORTÉS RECEIVING THE EMBASSY OF MONTEZUMA

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[illegible] Cyrus, [illegible] Hist. de [illegible] Sacramento, [illegible] 80.

Presentes de los Indios, de Monteçuma, á Cortes

neighborhood of the camp. Here they prepared various articles of food for the table of Cortés and his officers, without any recompense; while the common soldiers easily obtained a supply for themselves, in exchange for such trifles as they brought with them for barter. Thus the camp was liberally provided with meat and fish dressed in many savory ways, with cakes of corn, bananas, pine-apples, and divers luscious vegetables of the tropics, hitherto unknown to the Spaniards. The soldiers contrived, moreover, to obtain many little bits of gold, of no great value, indeed, from the natives; a traffic very displeasing to the partisans of Velasquez, who considered it an invasion of his rights. Cortés, however, did not think it prudent, in this matter, to balk the inclinations of his followers.[15]

At the expiration of seven, or eight days at most, the Mexican embassy presented itself before the camp. It may seem an incredibly short space of time, considering the distance of the capital was nearly seventy leagues. But it may be remembered that tidings were carried there by means of posts, as already noticed, in the brief space of four-and-twenty hours;[16] and four or five days would suffice for the descent of the envoys to the coast, accustomed as the Mexicans were to long and rapid travelling. At all events, no writer states the period occupied by the Indian emissaries on this occasion as longer than that mentioned.

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

[16] *Ante,* Book I, chap. 2, p. 44.

The embassy, consisting of two Aztec nobles, was accompanied by the governor, Teuhtlile, and by a hundred slaves, bearing the princely gifts of Montezuma. One of the envoys had been selected on account of the great resemblance which, as appeared from the painting representing the camp, he bore to the Spanish commander. And it is a proof of the fidelity of the painting, that the soldiers recognized the resemblance, and always distinguished the chief by the name of the "Mexican Cortés."

On entering the general's pavilion, the ambassadors saluted him and his officers with the usual signs of reverence to persons of great consideration, touching the ground with their hands and then carrying them to their heads, while the air was filled with clouds of incense, which rose up from the censers borne by their attendants. Some delicately wrought mats of the country (*petates*) were then unrolled, and on them the slaves displayed the various articles they had brought. They were of the most miscellaneous kind: shields, helmets, cuirasses, embossed with plates and ornaments of pure gold; collars and bracelets of the same metal, sandals, fans, *panaches* and crests of variegated feathers, intermingled with gold and silver thread, and sprinkled with pearls and precious stones; imitations of birds and animals in wrought and cast gold and silver, of exquisite workmanship; curtains, coverlets, and robes of cotton, fine as silk, of rich and various dyes, interwoven with feather-work that rivalled the deli-

cacy of painting.[17] There were more than thirty loads of cotton cloth in addition. Among the articles was the Spanish helmet sent to the capital, and now returned filled to the brim with grains of gold. But the things which excited the most admiration were two circular plates of gold and silver, "as large as carriage-wheels." One, representing the sun, was richly carved with plants and animals,—no doubt, denoting the Aztec century. It was thirty palms in circumference, and was valued at twenty thousand *pesos de oro.* The silver wheel, of the same size, weighed fifty marks.[18]

[17] From the checkered figure of some of these colored cottons, Peter Martyr infers, the Indians were acquainted with chess! He notices a curious fabric made of the hair of animals, feathers, and cotton thread, interwoven together. "Plumas illas et concinnant inter cuniculorum villos interque gosampij stamina ordiuntur, et intexunt operose adeo, ut quo pacto id faciant non bene intellexerimus." De Orbe Novo (Parisiis, 1587), dec. 5, cap. 10.

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 5.—Robertson cites Bernal Diaz as reckoning the value of the silver plate at 20,000 *pesos,* or about £5000. (History of America, vol. ii. note 75.) But Bernal Diaz speaks only of the value of the gold plate, which he estimates at 20,000 *pesos de oro,* different from the *pesos,* dollars, or ounces of silver, with which the historian confounds them. As the mention of the *peso de oro* will often recur in these pages, it will be well to make the reader acquainted with its probable value. Nothing is more difficult than to ascertain the actual value of the currency of a distant age; so many circumstances occur to embarrass the calculation, besides the general depreciation of the precious metals, such as the adulteration of specific coins, and the like. Señor Clemencin, the Secretary of the Royal Academy of History, in the sixth volume of its *Memorias,* has computed with great accuracy the value of the different denominations of the Spanish currency at the close of the fifteenth century, the period just preceding that of the conquest of Mexico. He makes no mention of the *peso de oro* in his tables. But he ascertains the precise value

The Spaniards could not conceal their rapture at the exhibition of treasures which so far surpassed all the dreams in which they had indulged. For, rich as were the materials, they were exceeded —according to the testimony of those who saw these articles afterwards in Seville, where they could coolly examine them—by the beauty and richness of the workmanship.[19]

When Cortés and his officers had completed their survey, the ambassadors courteously delivered the message of Montezuma. " It gave their master

of the gold ducat, which will answer our purpose as well. (Memorias de la Real Academia de Historia (Madrid, 1821), tom. vi. Ilust. 20.) Oviedo, a contemporary of the Conquerors, informs us that the *peso de oro* and the *castellano* were of the same value, and that was precisely one-third greater than the value of the ducat. (Hist. del Ind., lib. 6, cap. 8, ap. Ramusio, Navigationi et Viaggi (Venetia, 1565), tom. iii.) Now, the ducat, as appears from Clemencin, reduced to our currency, would be equal to eight dollars and seventy-five cents. *The peso de oro, therefore, was equal to eleven dollars and sixty-seven cents, or two pounds, twelve shillings, and sixpence sterling.* Keeping this in mind, it will be easy for the reader to determine the actual value, in *pesos de oro,* of any sum that may be hereafter mentioned.*

[19] "¡Cierto cosas de ver!" exclaims Las Casas, who saw them with the Emperor Charles V in Seville, in 1520. "Quedáron todos los que viéron aquestas cosas tan ricas y tan bien artifiçiadas y ermosísimas como de cosas nunca vistas," etc. (Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.) "Muy hermosas," says Oviedo, who saw them in Valladolid, and describes the great wheels more minutely; "todo era mucho de ver!" (Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.) The inquisitive Martyr, who examined them carefully, remarks, yet more emphatically, "Si quid unquam honoris humana ingenia in huiuscemodi artibus sunt adepta, principatum iure merito ista consequentur. Aurum, gemmasque non admiror quidem, quâ industriâ, quóve studio superet opus materiam, stupeo. Mille figuras et facies mille prospexi quæ scribere nequeo. Quid oculos hominum suâ pulchritudine æque possit allicere meo iudicio vidi nunquam." De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 9.

* But Ramirez, commenting upon this statement, estimates the *castellano* at $2.93.—M.

great pleasure," they said, "to hold this communication with so powerful a monarch as the King of Spain, for whom he felt the most profound respect. He regretted much that he could not enjoy a personal interview with the Spaniards, but the distance of his capital was too great; since the journey was beset with difficulties, and with too many dangers from formidable enemies, to make it possible. All that could be done, therefore, was for the strangers to return to their own land, with the proofs thus afforded them of his friendly disposition."

Cortés, though much chagrined at this decided refusal of Montezuma to admit his visit, concealed his mortification as he best might, and politely expressed his sense of the emperor's munificence. "It made him only the more desirous," he said, "to have a personal interview with him. He should feel it, indeed, impossible to present himself again before his own sovereign, without having accomplished this great object of his voyage; and one who had sailed over two thousand leagues of ocean held lightly the perils and fatigues of so short a journey by land." He once more requested them to become the bearers of his message to their master, together with a slight additional token of his respect.

This consisted of a few fine Holland shirts, a Florentine goblet, gilt and somewhat curiously enamelled, with some toys of little value,—a sorry return for the solid magnificence of the royal present. The ambassadors may have thought as much. At least, they showed no alacrity in charging them-

selves either with the present or the message, and, on quitting the Castilian quarters, repeated their assurance that the general's application would be unavailing.[20]

The splendid treasure, which now lay dazzling the eyes of the Spaniards, raised in their bosom very different emotions, according to the difference of their characters. Some it stimulated with the ardent desire to strike at once into the interior and possess themselves of a country which teemed with such boundless stores of wealth. Others looked on it as the evidence of a power altogether too formidable to be encountered with their present insignificant force. They thought, therefore, it would be most prudent to return and report their proceedings to the governor of Cuba, where preparations could be made commensurate with so vast an undertaking. There can be little doubt as to the impression made on the bold spirit of Cortés, on which difficulties ever operated as incentives, rather than discouragements, to enterprise. But he prudently said nothing,—at least in public,—preferring that so important a movement should flow from the determination of his whole army, rather than from his own individual impulse.

Meanwhile the soldiers suffered greatly from the inconveniences of their position amidst burning sands and the pestilent effluvia of the neighboring marshes, while the venomous insects of these hot regions left them no repose, day or night. Thirty

[20] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

of their number had already sickened and died; a loss that could ill be afforded by the little band. To add to their troubles, the coldness of the Mexican chiefs had extended to their followers; and the supplies for the camp were not only much diminished, but the prices set on them were exorbitant. The position was equally unfavorable for the shipping, which lay in an open roadstead, exposed to the fury of the first *norte* which should sweep the Mexican Gulf.

The general was induced by these circumstances to despatch two vessels, under Francisco de Montejo, with the experienced Alaminos for his pilot, to explore the coast in a northerly direction, and see if a safer port and more commodious quarters for the army could not be found there.

After the lapse of ten days the Mexican envoys returned. They entered the Spanish quarters with the same formality as on the former visit, bearing with them an additional present of rich stuffs and metallic ornaments, which, though inferior in value to those before brought, were estimated at three thousand ounces of gold. Besides these, there were four precious stones, of a considerable size, resembling emeralds, called by the natives *chalchuites,* each of which, as they assured the Spaniards, was worth more than a load of gold, and was designed as a mark of particular respect for the Spanish monarch.[21] Unfortunately,

[21] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 40.—Father Sahagun thus describes these stones, so precious in Mexico that the use of them was interdicted to any but the nobles: "The *chalchuites* are of a green color mixed with white, and are not transparent. They are much worn by persons of rank, and, attached to the wrist by a

they were not worth as many loads of earth in Europe.

Montezuma's answer was in substance the same as before. It contained a positive prohibition for the strangers to advance nearer to the capital, and expressed his confidence that, now they had obtained what they had most desired, they would return to their own country without unnecessary delay. Cortés received this unpalatable response courteously, though somewhat coldly, and, turning to his officers, exclaimed, "This is a rich and powerful prince indeed; yet it shall go hard but we will one day pay him a visit in his capital!"

While they were conversing, the bell struck for vespers. At the sound, the soldiers, throwing themselves on their knees, offered up their orisons before the large wooden cross planted in the sands. As the Aztec chiefs gazed with curious surprise, Cortés thought it a favorable occasion to impress them with what he conceived to be a principal object of his visit to the country. Father Olmedo accordingly expounded, as briefly and clearly as he could, the great doctrines of Christianity, touching on the atonement, the passion, and the resurrection, and concluding with assuring his astonished audience that it was their intention to extirpate the idolatrous practices of the nation and to substitute the pure worship of the true God. He then put into their hands a little image of the Virgin with the infant Redeemer, requesting them to place it in their temples instead of their sanguinary

thread, are a token of the nobility of the wearer." Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 11, cap. 8.

deities. How far the Aztec lords comprehended the mysteries of the faith, as conveyed through the double version of Aguilar and Marina, or how well they perceived the subtle distinctions between their own images and those of the Roman Church, we are not informed. There is reason to fear, however, that the seed fell on barren ground; for, when the homily of the good father ended, they withdrew with an air of dubious reserve very different from their friendly manners at the first interview. The same night every hut was deserted by the natives, and the Spaniards saw themselves suddenly cut off from supplies in the midst of a desolate wilderness. The movement had so suspicious an appearance that Cortés apprehended an attack would be made on his quarters, and took precautions accordingly. But none was meditated.

The army was at length cheered by the return of Montejo from his exploring expedition, after an absence of twelve days. He had run down the Gulf as far as Panuco, where he experienced such heavy gales, in attempting to double that headland, that he was driven back, and had nearly foundered. In the whole course of the voyage he had found only one place tolerably sheltered from the north winds. Fortunately, the adjacent country, well watered by fresh, running streams, afforded a favorable position for the camp; and thither, after some deliberation, it was determined to repair.[22]

[22] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 40, 41.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 6.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 29, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

CHAPTER VII

TROUBLES IN THE CAMP—PLAN OF A COLONY—MANAGEMENT OF CORTÉS—MARCH TO CEMPOALLA—PROCEEDINGS WITH THE NATIVES—FOUNDATION OF VERA CRUZ

1519

THERE is no situation which tries so severely the patience and discipline of the soldier as a life of idleness in camp, where his thoughts, instead of being bent on enterprise and action, are fastened on himself and the inevitable privations and dangers of his condition. This was particularly the case in the present instance, where, in addition to the evils of a scanty subsistence, the troops suffered from excessive heat, swarms of venomous insects, and the other annoyances of a sultry climate. They were, moreover, far from possessing the character of regular forces, trained to subordination under a commander whom they had long been taught to reverence and obey. They were soldiers of fortune, embarked with him in an adventure in which all seemed to have an equal stake, and they regarded their captain—the captain of a day—as little more than an equal.

There was a growing discontent among the men

at their longer residence in this strange land. They were still more dissatisfied on learning the general's intention to remove to the neighborhood of the port discovered by Montejo. "It was time to return," they said, "and report what had been done to the governor of Cuba, and not linger on these barren shores until they had brought the whole Mexican empire on their heads!" Cortés evaded their importunities as well as he could, assuring them there was no cause for despondency. "Everything so far had gone on prosperously, and, when they had taken up a more favorable position, there was no reason to doubt they might still continue the same profitable intercourse with the natives."

While this was passing, five Indians made their appearance in the camp one morning, and were brought to the general's tent. Their dress and whole appearance were different from those of the Mexicans. They wore rings of gold, and gems of bright blue stone in their ears and nostrils, while a gold leaf delicately wrought was attached to the under lip. Marina was unable to comprehend their language; but, on her addressing them in Aztec, two of them, it was found, could converse in that tongue. They said they were natives of Cempoalla, the chief town of the Totonacs, a powerful nation who had come upon the great plateau many centuries back, and, descending its eastern slope, settled along the sierras and broad plains which skirt the Mexican Gulf towards the north. Their country was one of the recent conquests of the Aztecs, and they experienced such vexatious oppres-

sions from their conquerors as made them very impatient of the yoke. They informed Cortés of these and other particulars. The fame of the Spaniards had reached their master, who sent these messengers to request the presence of the wonderful strangers in his capital.

This communication was eagerly listened to by the general, who, it will be remembered, was possessed of none of those facts, laid before the reader, respecting the internal condition of the kingdom, which he had no reason to suppose other than strong and united. An important truth now flashed on his mind, as his quick eye descried in this spirit of discontent a potent lever, by the aid of which he might hope to overturn this barbaric empire. He received the mission of the Totonacs most graciously, and, after informing himself, as far as possible, of their dispositions and resources, dismissed them with presents, promising soon to pay a visit to their lord.[1]

Meanwhile, his personal friends, among whom may be particularly mentioned Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, Cristóbal de Olid, Alonso de Avila, Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, were very busy in persuading the troops to take such measures as should enable Cortés to go forward in those ambitious plans for which he had no warrant from the powers of Velasquez. "To return now," they said, "was to abandon the enterprise on the threshold, which, under such a leader, must conduct to glory and incalculable riches. To return

[1] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 41.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 28.

to Cuba would be to surrender to the greedy governor the little gains they had already got. The only way was to persuade the general to establish a permanent colony in the country, the government of which would take the conduct of matters into its own hands and provide for the interests of its members. It was true, Cortés had no such authority from Velasquez. But the interests of the sovereigns, which were paramount to every other, imperatively demanded it."

These conferences could not be conducted so secretly, though held by night, as not to reach the ears of the friends of Velasquez.[2] They remonstrated against the proceedings, as insidious and disloyal. They accused the general of instigating them, and, calling on him to take measures without delay for the return of the troops to Cuba, announced their own intention to depart, with such followers as still remained true to the governor.

Cortés, instead of taking umbrage at this high-handed proceeding, or even answering in the same haughty tone, mildly replied "that nothing was further from his desire than to exceed his instructions. He, indeed, preferred to remain in the country, and continue his profitable intercourse with the natives. But, since the army thought otherwise, he should defer to their opinion, and give orders to return, as they desired." On the following morning, proclamation was made for the troops to

[2] The letter from the *cabildo* of Vera Cruz says nothing of these midnight conferences. Bernal Diaz, who was privy to them, is a sufficient authority. See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

hold themselves in readiness to embark at once on board the fleet, which was to sail for Cuba.[3]

Great was the sensation caused by their general's order. Even many of those before clamorous for it, with the usual caprice of men whose wishes are too easily gratified, now regretted it. The partisans of Cortés were loud in their remonstrances. "They were betrayed by the general," they cried, and, thronging round his tent, called on him to countermand his orders. "We came here," said they, "expecting to form a settlement, if the state of the country authorized it. Now it seems you have no warrant from the governor to make one. But there are interests, higher than those of Velasquez, which demand it. These territories are not his property, but were discovered for the sovereigns;[4] and it is necessary to plant a colony to watch over their interests, instead of wasting time in idle barter, or, still worse, of returning, in the present state of affairs, to Cuba.

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 30.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Bernal Diaz, Ibid., loc. cit.—Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—The deposition of a respectable person like Puertocarrero, taken in the spring of the following year, after his return to Spain, is a document of such authority that I have transferred it entire, in the original, to the Appendix, No. 7.

[4] Sometimes we find the Spanish writers referring to "the sovereigns," sometimes to "the emperor;" in the former case intending Queen Joanna, the crazy mother of Charles V., as well as himself. Indeed, all public acts and ordinances ran in the name of both. The title of "Highness," which until the reign of Charles V. had usually —not uniformly, as Robertson imagines (History of Charles V., vol. ii. p. 59)—been applied to the sovereign, now gradually gave way to that of "Majesty," which Charles affected after his election to the imperial throne. The same title is occasionally found in the correspondence of the Great Captain, and other courtiers of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

If you refuse," they concluded, "we shall protest against your conduct as disloyal to their Highnesses."

Cortés received this remonstrance with the embarrassed air of one by whom it was altogether unexpected. He modestly requested time for deliberation, and promised to give his answer on the following day. At the time appointed, he called the troops together, and made them a brief address. "There was no one," he said, "if he knew his own heart, more deeply devoted than himself to the welfare of his sovereigns and the glory of the Spanish name. He had not only expended his all, but incurred heavy debts, to meet the charges of this expedition, and had hoped to reimburse himself by continuing his traffic with the Mexicans. But, if the soldiers thought a different course advisable, he was ready to postpone his own advantage to the good of the state." [5] He concluded by declaring his willingness to take measures for settling a colony *in the name of the Spanish sovereigns,* and to nominate a magistracy to preside over it.[6]

[5] According to Robertson, Cortés told his men that he had proposed to establish a colony on the coast, before marching into the country; but he abandoned his design, at their entreaties to set out at once on the expedition. In the very next page we find him organizing this same colony. (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 241, 242.) The historian would have been saved this inconsistency, if he had followed either of the authorities whom he cites, Bernal Diaz and Herrera, or the letter from Vera Cruz, of which he had a copy. They all concur in the statement in the text.

[6] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS.—Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—"Our general, after some urging, acquiesced," says the blunt old soldier Bernal Diaz; "for, as the proverb says,

For the *alcaldes* he selected Puertocarrero and Montejo, the former cavalier his fast friend, and the latter the friend of Velasquez, and chosen for that very reason; a stroke of policy which perfectly succeeded. The *regidores, alguacil,* treasurer, and other functionaries were then appointed, all of them his personal friends and adherents. They were regularly sworn into office, and the new city received the title of *Villa Rica de Vera Cruz,* "The Rich Town of the True Cross;" a name which was considered as happily intimating that union of spiritual and temporal interests to which the arms of the Spanish adventurers in the New World were to be devoted.[7] Thus, by a single stroke of the pen, as it were, the camp was transformed into a civil community, and the whole frame-work and even title of the city were arranged, before the site of it had been settled.

The new municipality were not slow in coming together; when Cortés presented himself, cap in hand, before that august body, and, laying the powers of Velasquez on the table, respectfully tendered the resignation of his office of Captain-General, "which, indeed," he said, "had necessarily expired, since the authority of the governor was now superseded by that of the magistracy of Villa Rica de Vera Cruz." He then, with a profound obeisance, left the apartment.[8]

'You ask me to do what I have already made up my mind to.'" *Tu me lo ruegas, é yo me lo quiero.* Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

[7] According to Bernal Diaz, the title of "Vera Cruz" was intended to commemorate their landing on Good Friday. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

[8] Solís, whose taste for speech-making might have satisfied even

The council, after a decent time spent in deliberation, again requested his presence. "There was no one," they said, "who, on mature reflection, appeared to them so well qualified to take charge of the interests of the community, both in peace and in war, as himself; and they unanimously named him, in behalf of their Catholic Highnesses, Captain-General and Chief Justice of the colony." He was further empowered to draw, on his own account, one-fifth of the gold and silver which might hereafter be obtained by commerce or conquest from the natives.[9] Thus clothed with supreme civil and military jurisdiction, Cortés was not backward in asserting his authority. He found speedy occasion for it.

The transactions above described had succeeded each other so rapidly that the governor's party seemed to be taken by surprise, and had formed no plan of opposition. When the last measure was carried, however, they broke forth into the most indignant and opprobrious invectives, denouncing the whole as a systematic con-

the Abbé Mably (see his Treatise, "De la Manière d'écrire l'Histoire"), has put a very flourishing harangue on this occasion into the mouth of his hero, of which there is not a vestige in any contemporary account. (Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 7.) Dr. Robertson has transferred it to his own eloquent pages, without citing his author, indeed, who, considering he came a century and a half after the Conquest, must be allowed to be not the best, especially when the only, voucher for a fact.

[9] "Lo peor de todo que le otorgámos," says Bernal Diaz, somewhat peevishly, was, "que le dariamos el quinto del oro de lo que se huuiesse, despues de sacado el Real quinto." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.) The letter from Vera Cruz says nothing of this fifth. The reader who would see the whole account of this remarkable transaction in the original may find it in the Appendix, No. 8.

spiracy against Velasquez. These accusations led to recrimination from the soldiers of the other side, until from words they nearly proceeded to blows. Some of the principal cavaliers, among them Velasquez de Leon, a kinsman of the governor, Escobar, his page, and Diego de Ordaz, were so active in instigating these turbulent movements that Cortés took the bold measure of putting them all in irons and sending them on board the vessels. He then dispersed the common file by detaching many of them with a strong party under Alvarado to forage the neighboring country and bring home provisions for the destitute camp.

During their absence, every argument that cupidity or ambition could suggest was used to win the refractory to his views. Promises, and even gold, it is said, were liberally lavished; till, by degrees, their understandings were opened to a clearer view of the merits of the case. And when the foraging party reappeared with abundance of poultry and vegetables, and the cravings of the stomach—that great laboratory of disaffection, whether in camp or capital—were appeased, good humor returned with good cheer, and the rival factions embraced one another as companions in arms, pledged to a common cause. Even the high-mettled hidalgos on board the vessels did not long withstand the general tide of reconciliation, but one by one gave in their adhesion to the new government. What is more remarkable is that this forced conversion was not a hollow one, but from this time forward several of these very cavaliers

became the most steady and devoted partisans of Cortés.[10]

Such was the address of this extraordinary man, and such the ascendency which in a few months he had acquired over these wild and turbulent spirits! By this ingenious transformation of a military into a civil community, he had secured a new and effectual basis for future operations. He might now go forward without fear of check or control from a superior,—at least from any other superior than the crown, under which alone he held his commission. In accomplishing this, instead of incurring the charge of usurpation or of transcending his legitimate powers, he had transferred the responsibility, in a great measure, to those who had imposed on him the necessity of action. By this step, moreover, he had linked the fortunes of his followers indissolubly with his own. They had taken their chance with him, and, whether for weal or for woe, must abide the consequences. He was no longer limited to the narrow concerns of a sordid traffic, but, sure of their co-operation, might

[10] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 30, 31.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.—Declaraciones de Montejo y Puertocarrero, MSS.—In the process of Narvaez against Cortés, the latter is accused of being possessed with the Devil, as only Lucifer could have thus gained him the affections of the soldiery. (Demanda de Narvaez, MS.) Solís, on the other hand, sees nothing but good faith and loyalty in the conduct of the general, who acted from a sense of duty! (Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 6, 7.) Solís is even a more steady apologist for his hero than his own chaplain, Gomara, or the worthy magistrates of Vera Cruz. A more impartial testimony than either, probably, may be gathered from honest Bernal Diaz, so often quoted. A hearty champion of the cause, he was by no means blind to the defects or the merits of his leader.

now boldly meditate, and gradually disclose, those lofty schemes which he had formed in his own bosom for the conquest of an empire.[11]

Harmony being thus restored, Cortés sent his heavy guns on board the fleet, and ordered it to coast along the shore to the north as far as Chiahuitztla,* the town near which the destined port of the new city was situated; proposing, himself, at the head of his troops, to visit Cempoalla, on the march. The road lay for some miles across the dreary plains in the neighborhood of the modern Vera Cruz. In this sandy waste no signs of vegetation met their eyes, which, however, were occasionally refreshed by glimpses of the blue Atlantic, and by the distant view of the magnificent Orizaba, towering, with his spotless diadem of snow, far above his colossal brethren of the Andes.[12] As they advanced, the country gradually

[11] This may appear rather indifferent logic to those who consider that Cortés appointed the very body who, in turn, appointed him to the command. But the affectation of legal forms afforded him a thin varnish for his proceedings, which served his purpose, for the present at least, with the troops. For the future, he trusted to his good star—in other words, to the success of his enterprise—to vindicate his conduct to the Emperor. He did not miscalculate.

[12] The name of the mountain is not given, and probably was not known, but the minute description in the MS. of Vera Cruz leaves no doubt that it was the one mentioned in the text. "Entre las quales así una que excede en mucha altura á todas las otras y de ella se vee y descubre gran parte de la mar y de la tierra, y es tan alta, que si el dia no es bien claro, no se puede divisar ni ver lo alto de ella, porque de la mitad arriba está toda cubierta de nubes: y algunos veces, cuando hace muy claro dia, se vee por cima de las dichas nubes lo alto de ella, y está tan blanco que lo jusgamos por nieve." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) This huge volcano was called *Citlaltepetl,* or "Star Mountain," by the Mexicans,—perhaps from

* [According to Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., 289, Quiahuiztlan, *i.e.,* Rainy Place.—M.]

assumed a greener and richer aspect. They crossed a river, probably a tributary of the *Rio de la Antigua,* with difficulty, on rafts, and on some broken canoes that were lying on the banks. They now came in view of very different scenery,—wide-rolling plains covered with a rich carpet of verdure and overshadowed by groves of cocoas and feathery palms, among whose tall, slender stems were seen deer, and various wild animals with which the Spaniards were unacquainted. Some of the horsemen gave chase to the deer, and wounded, but did not succeed in killing them. They saw, also, pheasants and other birds; among them the wild turkey, the pride of the American forest, which the Spaniards described as a species of peacock.[13]

On their route they passed through some deserted villages, in which were Indian temples, where they found censers, and other sacred utensils, and manuscripts of the *agave* fibre, containing the picture-writing, in which, probably, their religious ceremonies were recorded. They now beheld, also, the hideous spectacle, with which they became afterwards familiar, of the mutilated corpses of victims who had been sacrificed to the accursed deities of the land. The Spaniards turned with loathing and indignation from a dis-

the fire which once issued from its conical summit, far above the clouds. It stands in the intendancy of Vera Cruz, and rises, according to Humboldt's measurement, to the enormous height of 17,368 feet above the ocean. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 265.) It is the highest peak but one in the whole range of the Mexican Cordilleras.

[13] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 44.

play of butchery which formed so dismal a contrast to the fair scenes of nature by which they were surrounded.

They held their course along the banks of the river, towards its source, when they were met by twelve Indians, sent by the cacique of Cempoalla to show them the way to his residence. At night they bivouacked in an open meadow, where they were well supplied with provisions by their new friends. They left the stream on the following morning, and, striking northerly across the country, came upon a wide expanse of luxuriant plains and woodland, glowing in all the splendor of tropical vegetation. The branches of the stately trees were gayly festooned with clustering vines of the dark-purple grape, variegated convolvuli, and other flowering parasites of the most brilliant dyes. The undergrowth of prickly aloe, matted with wild rose and honeysuckle, made in many places an almost impervious thicket. Amid this wilderness of sweet-smelling buds and blossoms fluttered numerous birds of the parrot tribe, and clouds of butterflies, whose gaudy colors, nowhere so gorgeous as in the *tierra caliente,* rivalled those of the vegetable creation; while birds of exquisite song, the scarlet cardinal, and the marvellous mocking-bird, that comprehends in his own notes the whole music of a forest, filled the air with delicious melody. The hearts of the stern Conquerors were not very sensible to the beauties of nature. But the magical charms of the scenery drew forth unbounded expressions of delight, and as they wandered through this "terrestrial paradise," as

they called it, they fondly compared it to the fairest regions of their own sunny land.[14]

As they approached the Indian city, they saw abundant signs of cultivation, in the trim gardens and orchards that lined both sides of the road. They were now met by parties of the natives, of either sex, who increased in numbers with every step of their progress. The women, as well as men, mingled fearlessly among the soldiers, bearing bunches and wreaths of flowers, with which they decorated the neck of the general's charger, and hung a chaplet of roses about his helmet. Flowers were the delight of this people. They bestowed much care in their cultivation, in which they were well seconded by a climate of alternate heat and moisture, stimulating the soil to the spontaneous production of every form of vegetable life. The same refined taste, as we shall see, pre-

[14] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 32, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 1.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—"Mui hermosas vegas y riberas tales y tan hermosas que en toda España no pueden ser mejores ansí de apaçibles á la vista como de fructíferas." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) The following poetical apostrophe, by Lord Morpeth, to the scenery of Cuba, equally applicable to that of the *tierra caliente,* will give the reader a more animated picture of the glories of these sunny climes than my own prose can. The verses, which have never been published, breathe the generous sentiment characteristic of their noble author:

"Ye tropic forests of unfading green,
Where the palm tapers and the orange glows,
Where the light bamboo waves her feathery screen,
And her far shade the matchless *ceiba* throws!

"Ye cloudless ethers of unchanging blue,
Save where the rosy streaks of eve give way
To the clear sapphire of your midnight hue,
The burnished azure of your perfect day!

"Yet tell me not my native skies are bleak,
That flushed with liquid wealth no cane-fields wave;
For Virtue pines, and Manhood dares not speak,
And Nature's glories brighten round the Slave."

vailed among the warlike Aztecs, and has survived the degradation of the nation in their descendants of the present day.[15]

Many of the women appeared, from their richer dress and numerous attendants, to be persons of rank. They were clad in robes of fine cotton, curiously colored, which reached from the neck—in the inferior orders, from the waist—to the ankles. The men wore a sort of mantle of the same material, *á la Morisca,* in the Moorish fashion, over their shoulders, and belts or sashes about the loins. Both sexes had jewels and ornaments of gold round their necks, while their ears and nostrils were perforated with rings of the same metal.

Just before reaching the town, some horsemen who had ridden in advance returned with the amazing intelligence "that they had been near enough to look within the gates, and found the houses all plated with burnished silver!" On entering the place, the silver was found to be nothing more than a brilliant coating of stucco, with which the principal buildings were covered; a circumstance which produced much merriment among the soldiers at the expense of their credulous comrades. Such ready credulity is a proof of the exalted state of their imaginations, which were prepared to see gold and silver in every object around

[15] "The same love of flowers," observes one of the most delightful of modern travellers, "distinguishes the natives now, as in the times of Cortés. And it presents a strange anomaly," she adds, with her usual acuteness; "this love of flowers having existed along with their sanguinary worship and barbarous sacrifices." Madame Calderon de la Barca, Life in Mexico, vol. i. let. 12.

them.[16] The edifices of the better kind were of stone and lime, or bricks dried in the sun; the poorer were of clay and earth. All were thatched with palm-leaves, which, though a flimsy roof, apparently, for such structures, were so nicely interwoven as to form a very effectual protection against the weather.

The city was said to contain from twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. This is the most moderate computation, and not improbable.[17] Slowly and silently the little army paced the narrow and now crowded streets of Cempoalla, inspiring the natives with no greater wonder than they themselves experienced at the display of a policy and refinement so far superior to anything they had witnessed in the New World.[18] The cacique came out in front of his residence to receive them. He was a tall and very corpulent man, and advanced leaning on two of his attendants. He received Cortés and his followers with great courtesy, and, after a brief interchange of civilities, assigned the army its quarters in a neighboring temple, into the spacious court-yard of which a

[16] "Con la imaginacion que llevaban, i buenos deseos, todo se les antojaba plata i oro lo que relucia." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 32, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

[17] This is Las Casas' estimate (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.) Torquemada hesitates between twenty, fifty, and one hundred and fifty thousand, each of which he names at different times! (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 26, nota.) The place was gradually abandoned, after the Conquest, for others, in a more favorable position, probably, for trade. Its ruins were visible at the close of the last century. See Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 39, nota.

[18] "Porque viven mas política y rasonablemente que ninguna de las gentes que hasta oy en estas partes se ha visto." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

number of apartments opened, affording excellent accommodation for the soldiery.

Here the Spaniards were well supplied with provisions, meat cooked after the fashion of the country, and maize made into bread-cakes. The general received, also, a present of considerable value from the cacique, consisting of ornaments of gold and fine cottons. Notwithstanding these friendly demonstrations, Cortés did not relax his habitual vigilance, nor neglect any of the precautions of a good soldier. On his route, indeed, he had always marched in order of battle, well prepared against surprise. In his present quarters, he stationed his sentinels with like care, posted his small artillery so as to command the entrance, and forbade any soldier to leave the camp without orders, under pain of death.[19]

The following morning, Cortés, accompanied by fifty of his men, paid a visit to the lord of Cempoalla in his own residence. It was a building of stone and lime, standing on a steep terrace of earth, and was reached by a flight of stone steps. It may have borne resemblance in its structure to some of the ancient buildings found in Central America. Cortés, leaving his soldiers in the courtyard, entered the mansion with one of his officers, and his fair interpreter, Doña Marina.[20] A long conference ensued, from which the Spanish general gathered much light respecting the state of

[19] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 33, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.

[20] The courteous title of *doña* is usually given by the Spanish chroniclers to this accomplished Indian.

the country. He first announced to the chief that he was the subject of a great monarch who dwelt beyond the waters; that he had come to the Aztec shores to abolish the inhuman worship which prevailed there, and to introduce the knowledge of the true God. The cacique replied that their gods, who sent them the sunshine and the rain, were good enough for them; that he was the tributary of a powerful monarch also, whose capital stood on a lake far off among the mountains,—a stern prince, merciless in his exactions, and, in case of resistance, or any offence, sure to wreak his vengeance by carrying off their young men and maidens to be sacrificed to his deities. Cortés assured him that he would never consent to such enormities; he had been sent by his sovereign to redress abuses and to punish the oppressor;[21] and, if the Totonacs would be true to him, he would enable them to throw off the detested yoke of the Aztecs.

The cacique added that the Totonac territory contained about thirty towns and villages, which could muster a hundred thousand warriors,—a number much exaggerated.[22] There were other provinces of the empire, he said, where the Aztec rule was equally odious; and between him and the capital lay the warlike republic of Tlascala, which had always maintained its independence of Mexico. The fame of the Spaniards had gone before

[21] "He had come only to redress injuries, to protect the captive, to succor the weak, and to overthrow tyranny." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 33, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.) Are we reading the adventures—it is the language—of Don Quixote or Amadis de Gaula?

[22] Ibid., cap. 36.—Cortés, in his Second Letter to the Emperor Charles V., estimates the number of fighting-men at 50,000. Relacion segunda, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.

them, and he was well acquainted with their terrible victory at Tabasco. But still he looked with doubt and alarm to a rupture with "the great Montezuma," as he always styled him; whose armies, on the least provocation, would pour down from the mountain regions of the West, and, rushing over the plains like a whirlwind, sweep off the wretched people to slavery and sacrifice!

Cortés endeavored to reassure him, by declaring that a single Spaniard was stronger than a host of Aztecs. At the same time, it was desirable to know what nations would co-operate with him, not so much on his account as theirs, that he might distinguish friend from foe and know whom he was to spare in this war of extermination. Having raised the confidence of the admiring chief by this comfortable and politic vaunt, he took an affectionate leave, with the assurance that he would shortly return and concert measures for their future operations, when he had visited his ships in the adjoining port and secured a permanent settlement there.[23]

The intelligence gained by Cortés gave great satisfaction to his mind. It confirmed his former views, and showed, indeed, the interior of the monarchy to be in a state far more distracted than he had supposed. If he had before scarcely shrunk from attacking the Aztec empire, in the true spirit of a knight-errant, with his single arm, as it were, what had he now to fear, when one half of the na-

[23] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 81.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.

tion could be thus marshalled against the other? In the excitement of the moment, his sanguine spirit kindled with an enthusiasm which overleaped every obstacle. He communicated his own feelings to the officers about him, and, before a blow was struck, they already felt as if the banners of Spain were waving in triumph from the towers of Montezuma! But many a bloody field was to be fought, many a peril and privation to be encountered, before that consummation could be attained.

Taking leave of the hospitable Indian, on the following day the Spaniards took the road to Chiahuitztla,[24] about four leagues distant, near which was the port discovered by Montejo, where their ships were now riding at anchor. They were provided by the cacique with four hundred Indian porters, *tamanes,* as they were called, to transport the baggage. These men easily carried fifty pounds' weight five or six leagues in a day. They were in use all over the Mexican empire, and the Spaniards found them of great service, henceforth, in relieving the troops from this part of their duty. They passed through a country of the same rich, voluptuous character as that which they had lately traversed, and arrived early next morning at the Indian town, perched like a fortress on a bold, rocky eminence that commanded the Gulf. Most of the inhabitants had fled, but fifteen

[24] The historian, with the aid of Clavigero, himself a Mexican, may rectify frequent blunders of former writers, in the orthography of Aztec names. Both Robertson and Solís spell the name of this place *Quiabislan.* Blunders in such a barbarous nomenclature must be admitted to be very pardonable.

of the principal men remained, who received them in a friendly manner, offering the usual compliments of flowers and incense. The people of the place, losing their fears, gradually returned. While conversing with the chiefs, the Spaniards were joined by the worthy cacique of Cempoalla, borne by his men on a litter. He eagerly took part in their deliberations. The intelligence gained here by Cortés confirmed the accounts already gathered of the feelings and resources of the Totonac nation.

In the midst of their conference, they were interrupted by a movement among the people, and soon afterwards five men entered the great square or market-place, where they were standing. By their lofty port, their peculiar and much richer dress, they seemed not to be of the same race as these Indians. Their dark, glossy hair was tied in a knot on the top of the head. They had bunches of flowers in their hands, and were followed by several attendants, some bearing wands with cords, others fans, with which they brushed away the flies and insects from their lordly masters. As these persons passed through the place, they cast a haughty look on the Spaniards, scarcely deigning to return their salutations. They were immediately joined, in great confusion, by the Totonac chiefs, who seemed anxious to conciliate them by every kind of attention.

The general, much astonished, inquired of Marina what it meant. She informed him they were Aztec nobles, empowered to receive the tribute for Montezuma. Soon after, the chiefs returned with

dismay painted on their faces. They confirmed Marina's statement, adding that the Aztecs greatly resented the entertainment afforded the Spaniards without the Emperor's permission, and demanded in expiation twenty young men and women for sacrifice to the gods. Cortés showed the strongest indignation at this insolence. He required the Totonacs not only to refuse the demand, but to arrest the persons of the collectors and throw them into prison. The chiefs hesitated, but he insisted on it so peremptorily that they at length complied, and the Aztecs were seized, bound hand and foot, and placed under a guard.

In the night, the Spanish general procured the escape of two of them, and had them brought secretly before him. He expressed his regret at the indignity they had experienced from the Totonacs; told them he would provide means for their flight, and to-morrow would endeavor to obtain the release of their companions. He desired them to report this to their master, with assurances of the great regard the Spaniards entertained for him, notwithstanding his ungenerous behavior in leaving them to perish from want on his barren shores. He then sent the Mexican nobles down to the port, whence they were carried to another part of the coast by water, for fear of the violence of the Totonacs. These were greatly incensed at the escape of the prisoners, and would have sacrificed the remainder at once, but for the Spanish commander, who evinced the utmost horror at the proposal, and ordered them to be sent for safe custody on board the fleet. Soon after, they were permitted to join

their companions. This artful proceeding, so characteristic of the policy of Cortés, had, as we shall see hereafter, all the effect intended on Montezuma. It cannot be commended, certainly, as in the true spirit of chivalry. Yet it has not wanted its panegyrist among the national historians! [25]

By order of Cortés, messengers were despatched to the Totonac towns to report what had been done, calling on them to refuse the payment of further tribute to Montezuma. But there was no need of messengers. The affrighted attendants of the Aztec lords had fled in every direction, bearing the tidings, which spread like wildfire through the country, of the daring insult offered to the majesty of Mexico. The astonished Indians, cheered with the sweet hope of regaining their ancient liberty, came in numbers to Chiahuitztla, to see and confer with the formidable strangers. The more timid, dismayed at the thought of encountering the power of Montezuma, recommended an embassy to avert his displeasure by timely concessions. But the dexterous management of Cortés had committed them too far to allow any reasonable expectation of indulgence from this quarter. After some hesitation, therefore, it was determined to embrace the protection of the Spaniards, and to make one bold effort for the recovery of freedom. Oaths of allegiance were taken by the chiefs to the Spanish sovereigns, and duly recorded by

[25] "Grande artífice," exclaims Solís, "de medir lo que disponia con lo que recelaba; y prudente capitan él que sabe caminar en alcance de las contingencias"! Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 9.

Godoy, the royal notary. Cortés, satisfied with the important acquisition of so many vassals to the crown, set out soon after for the destined port, having first promised to revisit Cempoalla, where his business was but partially accomplished.[26]

The spot selected for the new city was only half a league distant, in a wide and fruitful plain, affording a tolerable haven for the shipping. Cortés was not long in determining the circuit of the walls, and the sites of the fort, granary, town-house, temple, and other public buildings. The friendly Indians eagerly assisted, by bringing materials, stone, lime, wood, and bricks dried in the sun. Every man put his hand to the work. The general labored with the meanest of the soldiers, stimulating their exertions by his example as well as voice. In a few weeks the task was accomplished, and a town rose up, which, if not quite worthy of the aspiring name it bore, answered most of the purposes for which it was intended. It served as a good *point d'appui* for future operations; a place of retreat for the disabled, as well as for the army in case of reverses; a magazine for stores, and for such articles as might be received from or sent to the mother-country; a port for the shipping; a position of sufficient strength to overawe the adjacent country.[27]

[26] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 81.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 34–36, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Bernal Diaz, Conquista, cap. 46, 47.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 10, 11.

[27] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Conquista, cap. 48.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS.—Notwithstanding the advantages of its situation, La Villa Rica was abandoned in a few years for a neighboring position to

It was the first colony—the fruitful parent of so many others—in New Spain. It was hailed with satisfaction by the simple natives, who hoped to repose in safety under its protecting shadow. Alas! they could not read the future, or they would have found no cause to rejoice in this harbinger of a revolution more tremendous than any predicted by their bards and prophets. It was not the good Quetzalcoatl who had returned to claim his own again, bringing peace, freedom, and civilization in his train. Their fetters, indeed, would be broken, and their wrongs be amply avenged on the proud head of the Aztec. But it was to be by that strong arm which should bow down equally the oppressor and the oppressed. The light of civilization would be poured on their land. But it would be the light of a consuming fire, before which their barbaric glory, their institutions, their very existence and name as a nation, would wither and become extinct! Their doom was sealed when the white man had set his foot on their soil.

the south, not far from the mouth of the Antigua. This second settlement was known by the name of *Vera Cruz Vieja,* "Old Vera Cruz." Early in the seventeenth century this place, also, was abandoned for the present city, *Nueva Vera Cruz,* or New Vera Cruz, as it is called. (See *ante,* chap. 5, note 8.) Of the true cause of these successive migrations we are ignorant. If, as is pretended, it was on account of the *vómito,* the inhabitants, one would suppose, can have gained little by the exchange. (See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 210.) A want of attention to these changes has led to much confusion and inaccuracy in the ancient maps. Lorenzana has not escaped them in his chart and topographical account of the route of Cortés.

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER AZTEC EMBASSY—DESTRUCTION OF THE IDOLS—DESPATCHES SENT TO SPAIN—CONSPIRACY IN THE CAMP—THE FLEET SUNK

1519

WHILE the Spaniards were occupied with their new settlement, they were surprised by the presence of an embassy from Mexico. The account of the imprisonment of the royal collectors had spread rapidly through the country. When it reached the capital, all were filled with amazement at the unprecedented daring of the strangers. In Montezuma every other feeling, even that of fear, was swallowed up in indignation; and he showed his wonted energy in the vigorous preparations which he instantly made to punish his rebellious vassals and to avenge the insult offered to the majesty of the empire. But when the Aztec officers liberated by Cortés reached the capital and reported the courteous treatment they had received from the Spanish commander, Montezuma's anger was mitigated, and his superstitious fears, getting the ascendency again, induced him to resume his former timid and conciliatory policy. He accordingly sent an embassy, consisting of two youths,

his nephews, and four of the ancient nobles of his court, to the Spanish quarters. He provided them, in his usual munificent spirit, with a princely donation of gold, rich cotton stuffs, and beautiful mantles of the *plumaje,* or feather embroidery. The envoys, on coming before Cortés, presented him with the articles, at the same time offering the acknowledgments of their master for the courtesy he had shown in liberating his captive nobles. He was surprised and afflicted, however, that the Spaniards should have countenanced his faithless vassals in their rebellion. He had no doubt they were the strangers whose arrival had been so long announced by the oracles, and of the same lineage with himself.[1] From deference to them he would spare the Totonacs, while they were present. But the time for vengeance would come.

Cortés entertained the Indian chieftains with frank hospitality. At the same time, he took care to make such a display of his resources as, while it amused their minds, should leave a deep impression of his power. He then, after a few trifling gifts, dismissed them with a conciliatory message to their master, and the assurance that he should soon pay his respects to him in his capital, where all misunderstanding between them would be readily adjusted.

The Totonac allies could scarcely credit their senses, when they gathered the nature of this interview. Notwithstanding the presence of the

[1] "Teniendo respeto á que tiene por cierto, que somos los que sus antepassados les auian dicho, que auian de venir á sus tierras, é que deuemos de ser de sus linajes." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 48.

Spaniards, they had looked with apprehension to the consequences of their rash act; and their feelings of admiration were heightened into awe for the strangers who, at this distance, could exercise so mysterious an influence over the terrible Montezuma.[2]

Not long after, the Spaniards received an application from the cacique of Cempoalla to aid him in a dispute in which he was engaged with a neighboring city. Cortés marched with a part of his forces to his support. On the route, one Morla, a common soldier, robbed a native of a couple of fowls. Cortés, indignant at this violation of his orders before his face, and aware of the importance of maintaining a reputation for good faith with his allies, commanded the man to be hung up, at once, by the roadside, in face of the whole army. Fortunately for the poor wretch, Pedro de Alvarado, the future conqueror of Quiché, was present, and ventured to cut down the body while there was yet life in it. He, probably, thought enough had been done for example, and the loss of a single life, unnecessarily, was more than the little band could afford. The anecdote is characteristic, as showing the strict discipline maintained by Cortés over his men, and the freedom assumed by his captains, who regarded him on terms nearly of equality,—as a fellow-adventurer with themselves. This feeling of companionship led to a spirit of insubordination among them, which made his own post as commander the more delicate and difficult.

[2] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 37.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.

On reaching the hostile city, but a few leagues from the coast, they were received in an amicable manner; and Cortés, who was accompanied by his allies, had the satisfaction of reconciling these different branches of the Totonac family with each other, without bloodshed. He then returned to Cempoalla, where he was welcomed with joy by the people, who were now impressed with as favorable an opinion of his moderation and justice as they had before been of his valor. In token of his gratitude, the Indian cacique delivered to the general eight Indian maidens, richly dressed, wearing collars and ornaments of gold, with a number of female slaves to wait on them. They were daughters of the principal chiefs, and the cacique requested that the Spanish captains might take them as their wives. Cortés received the damsels courteously, but told the cacique they must first be baptized, as the sons of the Church could have no commerce with idolaters.[3] He then declared that it was a great object of his mission to wean the natives from their heathenish abominations, and besought the Totonac lord to allow his idols to be cast down, and the symbols of the true faith to be erected in their place.

To this the other answered, as before, that his gods were good enough for him; nor could all the persuasion of the general, nor the preaching of Father Olmedo, induce him to acquiesce. Mingled with his polytheism, he had conceptions of a Su-

[3] "De buena gana recibirian las Doncellas como fuesen Christianas; porque de otra manera, no era permitido á hombres, hijos de la Iglesia de Dios, tener comercio con idólatras." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13.

preme and Infinite Being, Creator of the Universe, and his darkened understanding could not comprehend how such a Being could condescend to take the form of humanity, with its infirmities and ills, and wander about on earth, the voluntary victim of persecution from the hands of those whom his breath had called into existence.[4] He plainly told the Spaniards that he would resist any violence offered to his gods, who would, indeed, avenge the act themselves, by the instant destruction of their enemies.

But the zeal of the Christians had mounted too high to be cooled by remonstrance or menace. During their residence in the land, they had witnessed more than once the barbarous rites of the natives, their cruel sacrifices of human victims, and their disgusting cannibal repasts.[5] Their souls sickened at these abominations, and they agreed with one voice to stand by their general, when he told them that " Heaven would never smile on their enterprise if they countenanced such atrocities, and that, for his own part, he was resolved the Indian idols should be demolished that very hour, if it cost

[4] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Herrera has put a very edifying harangue, on this occasion, into the mouth of Cortés, which savors much more of the priest than the soldier. Does he not confound him with Father Olmedo?

[5] " Esto habemos visto," says the Letter of Vera Cruz, " algunos de nosotros, y los que lo han visto dizen que es la mas terrible y la mas espantosa cosa de ver que jamas han visto." Still more strongly speaks Bernal Diaz. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 51.) The Letter computes that there were fifty or sixty persons thus butchered in each of the *teocallis* every year; giving an annual consumption, in the countries which the Spaniards had then visited, of three or four thousand victims! (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) However loose this arithmetic may be, the general fact is appalling.

him his life." To postpone the work of conversion was a sin. In the enthusiasm of the moment, the dictates of policy and ordinary prudence were alike unheeded.

Scarcely waiting for his commands, the Spaniards moved towards one of the principal *teocallis,* or temples, which rose high on a pyramidal foundation, with a steep ascent of stone steps in the middle. The cacique, divining their purpose, instantly called his men to arms. The Indian warriors gathered from all quarters, with shrill cries and clashing of weapons; while the priests, in their dark cotton robes, with dishevelled tresses, matted with blood, flowing wildly over their shoulders, rushed frantic among the natives, calling on them to protect their gods from violation! All was now confusion, tumult, and warlike menace, where so lately had been peace and the sweet brotherhood of nations.

Cortés took his usual prompt and decided measures. He caused the cacique and some of the principal inhabitants and priests to be arrested by his soldiers. He then commanded them to quiet the people, for, if an arrow was shot against a Spaniard, it should cost every one of them his life. Marina, at the same time, represented the madness of resistance, and reminded the cacique that if he now alienated the affections of the Spaniards he would be left without a protector against the terrible vengeance of Montezuma. These temporal considerations seem to have had more weight with the Totonac chieftain than those of a more spiritual nature. He covered his face with his hands, ex-

claiming that the gods would avenge their own wrongs.

The Christians were not slow in availing themselves of his tacit acquiescence. Fifty soldiers, at a signal from their general, sprang up the great stairway of the temple, entered the building on the summit, the walls of which were black with human gore, tore the huge wooden idols from their foundations, and dragged them to the edge of the terrace. Their fantastic forms and features, conveying a symbolic meaning, which was lost on the Spaniards, seemed in their eyes only the hideous lineaments of Satan. With great alacrity they rolled the colossal monsters down the steps of the pyramid, amidst the triumphant shouts of their own companions, and the groans and lamentations of the natives. They then consummated the whole by burning them in the presence of the assembled multitude.

The same effect followed as in Cozumel. The Totonacs, finding their deities incapable of preventing or even punishing this profanation of their shrines, conceived a mean opinion of their power, compared with that of the mysterious and formidable strangers. The floor and walls of the *teocalli* were then cleansed, by command of Cortés, from their foul impurities; a fresh coating of stucco was laid on them by the Indian masons; and an altar was raised, surmounted by a lofty cross, and hung with garlands of roses. A procession was next formed, in which some of the principal Totonac priests, exchanging their dark mantles for robes of white, carried lighted candles in their

hands; while an image of the Virgin, half smothered under the weight of flowers, was borne aloft, and, as the procession climbed the steps of the temple, was deposited above the altar. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, and the impressive character of the ceremony and the passionate eloquence of the good priest touched the feelings of the motley audience, until Indians as well as Spaniards, if we may trust the chronicler, were melted into tears and audible sobs. The Protestant missionary seeks to enlighten the understanding of his convert by the pale light of reason. But the bolder Catholic, kindling the spirit by the splendor of the spectacle and by the glowing portrait of an agonized Redeemer, sweeps along his hearers in a tempest of passion, that drowns everything like reflection. He has secured his convert, however, by the hold on his affections,—an easier and more powerful hold, with the untutored savage, than reason.

An old soldier named Juan de Torres, disabled by bodily infirmity, consented to remain and watch over the sanctuary and instruct the natives in its services. Cortés then, embracing his Totonac allies, now brothers in religion as in arms, set out once more for the Villa Rica, where he had some arrangements to complete previous to his departure for the capital.[6]

He was surprised to find that a Spanish vessel had arrived there in his absence, having on board

[6] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 51, 52.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 43.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13, 14.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

twelve soldiers and two horses. It was under the command of a captain named Saucedo, a cavalier of the ocean, who had followed in the track of Cortés in quest of adventure. Though a small, they afforded a very seasonable body of recruits for the little army. By these men, the Spaniards were informed that Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, had lately received a warrant from the Spanish government to establish a colony in the newly-discovered countries.

Cortés now resolved to put a plan in execution which he had been some time meditating. He knew that all the late acts of the colony, as well as his own authority, would fall to the ground without the royal sanction. He knew, too, that the interest of Velasquez, which was great at court, would, so soon as he was acquainted with his secession, be wholly employed to circumvent and crush him. He resolved to anticipate his movements, and to send a vessel to Spain with despatches addressed to the emperor himself, announcing the nature and extent of his discoveries, and to obtain, if possible, the confirmation of his proceedings. In order to conciliate his master's good will, he further proposed to send him such a present as should suggest lofty ideas of the importance of his own services to the crown. To effect this, the royal fifth he considered inadequate. He conferred with his officers, and persuaded them to relinquish their share of the treasure. At his instance, they made a similar application to the soldiers; representing that it was the earnest wish of the general, who set the example by resigning

his own fifth, equal to the share of the crown. It was but little that each man was asked to surrender, but the whole would make a present worthy of the monarch for whom it was intended. By this sacrifice they might hope to secure his indulgence for the past and his favor for the future; a temporary sacrifice, that would be well repaid by the security of the rich possessions which awaited them in Mexico. A paper was then circulated among the soldiers, which all who were disposed to relinquish their shares were requested to sign. Those who declined should have their claims respected, and receive the amount due to them. No one refused to sign; thus furnishing another example of the extraordinary power obtained by Cortés over these rapacious spirits, who, at his call, surrendered up the very treasures which had been the great object of their hazardous enterprise![7]

He accompanied this present with a letter to

[7] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 53.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

A complete inventory of the articles received from Montezuma is contained in the *Carta de Vera Cruz*.—The following are a few of the items.

Two collars made of gold and precious stones.

A hundred ounces of gold ore, that their Highnesses might see in what state the gold came from the mines.

Two birds made of green feathers, with feet, beaks, and eyes of gold,—and, in the same piece with them, animals of gold resembling snails.

A large alligator's head of gold.

A bird of green feathers, with feet, beak, and eyes of gold.

Two birds made of thread and feather-work, having the quills of their wings and tails, their feet, eyes, and the ends of their beaks of gold,—standing upon two reeds covered with gold, which are raised on balls of feather-work and gold embroidery, one white and the other yellow, with seven tassels of feather-work hanging from each of them.

the emperor, in which he gave a full account of all that had befallen him since his departure from Cuba; of his various discoveries, battles, and traffic with the natives; their conversion to Christianity; his strange perils and sufferings; many particulars respecting the lands he had visited, and such as he could collect in regard to the great Mexican monarchy and its sovereign. He stated his difficulties with the governor of Cuba, the proceedings of the army in reference to colonization, and besought the emperor to confirm their acts, as well as his own authority, expressing his entire confidence that he should be able, with the aid of his brave followers, to place the Castilian crown in possession of this great Indian empire.[8]

This was the celebrated *First Letter,* as it is called, of Cortés, which has hitherto eluded every

A large silver wheel weighing forty-eight marks, several bracelets and leaves of the same metal, together with five smaller shields, the whole weighing sixty-two marks of silver.

A box of feather-work embroidered on leather, with a large plate of gold, weighing seventy ounces, in the midst.

Two pieces of cloth woven with feathers; another with variegated colors; and another worked with black and white figures.

A large wheel of gold, with figures of strange animals on it, and worked with tufts of leaves; weighing three thousand eight hundred ounces.

A fan of variegated feather-work, with thirty-seven rods plated with gold.

Five fans of variegated feathers,—four of which have ten, and the other thirteen, rods embossed with gold.

Sixteen shields of precious stones, with feathers of various colors hanging from their rims.

Two pieces of cotton very richly wrought with black and white embroidery.

Six shields, each covered with a plate of gold, with something resembling a golden mitre in the centre.

[8] "Una muy larga Carta," says Gomara, in his loose analysis of it. Crónica, cap. 40.

search that has been made for it in the libraries of Europe.[9] Its existence is fully established by references to it, both in his own subsequent letters, and in the writings of contemporaries.[10] Its general

[9] Dr. Robertson states that the Imperial Library at Vienna was examined for this document, at his instance, but without success. (History of America, vol. ii. note 70.) I have not been more fortunate in the researches made for me in the British Museum, the Royal Library of Paris, and that of the Academy of History at Madrid. The last is a great depository for the colonial historical documents; but a very thorough inspection of its papers makes it certain that this is wanting to the collection. As the emperor received it on the eve of his embarkation for Germany, and the Letter of Vera Cruz, forwarded at the same time, is in the library of Vienna, this would seem, after all, to be the most probable place of its retreat.

[10] "By a ship," says Cortés, in the very first sentence of his Second Letter to the Emperor, "which I despatched from this your sacred majesty's province of New Spain on the 16th of July of the year 1519, I sent your highness a very long and particular relation of what had happened from my coming hither up to that time." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 38.) "Cortés wrote," says Bernal Diaz, "as he informed us, an accurate report, but we did not see his letter." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 53.) (Also, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1, and Gomara, ut supra.) Were it not for these positive testimonies, one might suppose that the Carta de Vera Cruz had suggested an *imaginary* letter of Cortés. Indeed, the copy of the former document belonging to the Spanish Academy of History—and perhaps the original at Vienna—bears the erroneous title of "Primera Relacion de Cortés." *

* [There can be little doubt that the "Letter of Vera Cruz" is the document referred to by Cortés, writing in October, 1520, as the "muy larga y particular Relacion" which he had "despatched" to the emperor in the summer of the preceding year. This language would not necessarily imply that the letter so described bore his own signature, while it was a natural mode of designating one of which he was the real author. It is easy to understand why, holding as yet no direct commission from the crown, he should have been less solicitous to appear as the narrator of his own exploits than to give them an appearance of official sanction and cover up his irregularity in not addressing his report to Velasquez, the official superior from whose control he was seeking to emancipate himself. Nor is it necessary, in accepting this hypothesis, to reject the statement of Bernal Diaz that Cortés sent to the emperor a relation under his own hand

purport is given by his chaplain Gomara. The importance of the document has doubtless been much overrated; and, should it ever come to light, it will probably be found to add little of interest to the matter contained in the letter from Vera Cruz, which has formed the basis of the preceding portion of our narrative. Cortés had no sources of information beyond those open to the authors of the latter document. He was even less full and frank in his communications, if it be true that he suppressed all notice of the discoveries of his two immediate predecessors.[11]

The magistrates of the Villa Rica, in their epistle, went over the same ground with Cortés; concluding with an emphatic representation of the misconduct of Velasquez, whose venality, extortion, and selfish devotion to his personal interests, to the exclusion of those of his sovereigns as well as of his own followers, they placed in a most clear and unenviable light.[12] They implored the gov-

[11] This is the imputation of Bernal Diaz, reported on hearsay, as he admits he never saw the letter himself. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 54.

[12] "Fingiendo mill cautelas," says Las Casas, politely, of this part of the letter, "y afirmando otras muchas falsedades é mentiras"! Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

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which he did not show to his companions. It seems to have been his habit on subsequent occasions, when sending a detailed report, to accompany it with a briefer and more private letter, giving a summary of what was contained in the longer document, sometimes with the addition of other matter, to be read by the emperor himself. One such letter, cited hereafter (vol. iii. p. 266, note), mentions "una relacion bien larga y particular," which he was sending under the same date. That letters of this kind should not always have been preserved can excite no surprise; but it is highly improbable that the same fate should have befallen a full official report, the first of a series otherwise complete and disseminated by means of copies.—K.]

ernment not to sanction his interference with the new colony, which would be fatal to its welfare, but to commit the undertaking to Hernando Cortés, as the man most capable, by his experience and conduct, of bringing it to a glorious termination.[13]

With this letter went also another in the name of the citizen-soldiers of Villa Rica, tendering their dutiful submission to the sovereigns, and requesting the confirmation of their proceedings, above all, that of Cortés as their general.

The selection of the agents for the mission was a delicate matter, as on the result might depend the future fortunes of the colony and its commander. Cortés intrusted the affair to two cavaliers on whom he could rely; Francisco de Montejo, the ancient partisan of Velasquez, and Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero. The latter officer was

[13] This document is of the greatest value and interest, coming as it does from the best-instructed persons in the camp. It presents an elaborate record of all then known of the countries they had visited, and of the principal movements of the army, to the time of the foundation of the Villa Rica. The writers conciliate our confidence by the circumspect tone of their narration. "Querer dar," they say, "á Vuestra Magestad todas las particularidades de esta tierra y gente de ella, podria ser que en algo se errase la relacion, porque muchas de ellas no se han visto mas de por informaciones de los natureles de ella, y por esto no nos entremetemos á dar mas de aquello que por muy cierto y verdadero Vras. Reales Altezas podrán mandar tener." The account given of Velasquez, however, must be considered as an *ex-parte* testimony, and, as such, admitted with great reserve. It was essential to their own vindication, to vindicate Cortés. The letter has never been printed. The original exists, as above stated, in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The copy in my possession, covering more than sixty pages folio, is taken from that of the Academy of History at Madrid.*

* [The letter has since been printed, from the original at Vienna, in the Col. de Doc. inéd. para la Hist. de España, tom. i.—K.]

a near kinsman of the count of Medellin, and it was hoped his high connections might secure a favorable influence at court.

Together with the treasure, which seemed to verify the assertion that "the land teemed with gold as abundantly as that whence Solomon drew the same precious metal for his temple," [14] several Indian manuscripts were sent. Some were of cotton, others of the Mexican *agave*. Their unintelligible characters, says a chronicler, excited little interest in the Conquerors. As evidence of intellectual culture, however, they formed higher objects of interest to a philosophic mind than those costly fabrics which attested only the mechanical ingenuity of the nation.[15] Four Indian slaves were added as specimens of the natives. They had been rescued from the cages in which they were confined for sacrifice. One of the best vessels of the fleet was selected for the voyage, manned by fifteen seamen, and placed under the direction of the pilot Alaminos. He was directed to hold his course through the Bahama channel, north of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was then called, and on no account to touch at that island, or any other in the Indian Ocean. With these instructions, the good ship took its departure on the 26th of July, freighted with the treasures and the good wishes

[14] "A nuestra parecer se debe creer, que ai en esta tierra tanto quanto en aquella de donde se dize aver llevado Salomon el oro para el templo." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

[15] Peter Martyr, pre-eminent above his contemporaries for the enlightened views he took of the new discoveries, devotes half a chapter to the Indian manuscripts, in which he recognized the evidence of a civilization analogous to the Egyptian. De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 8.

of the community of the Villa Rica de Vera Cruz.

After a quick run the emissaries made the island of Cuba, and, in direct disregard of orders, anchored before Marien, on the northern side of the island. This was done to accommodate Montejo, who wished to visit a plantation owned by him in the neighborhood. While off the port, a sailor got on shore, and, crossing the island to St. Jago, the capital, spread everywhere tidings of the expedition, until they reached the ears of Velasquez. It was the first intelligence which had been received of the armament since its departure; and, as the governor listened to the recital, it would not be easy to paint the mingled emotions of curiosity, astonishment, and wrath which agitated his bosom. In the first sally of passion, he poured a storm of invective on the heads of his secretary and treasurer, the friends of Cortés, who had recommended him as the leader of the expedition. After somewhat relieving himself in this way, he despatched two fast-sailing vessels to Marien with orders to seize the rebel ship, and, in case of her departure, to follow and overtake her.

But before the ships could reach that port the bird had flown, and was far on her way across the broad Atlantic. Stung with mortification at this fresh disappointment, Velasquez wrote letters of indignant complaint to the government at home, and to the Hieronymite fathers in Hispaniola, demanding redress. He obtained little satisfaction from the latter. He resolved, however, to take the matter into his own hands, and set about mak-

ing formidable preparations for another squadron, which should be more than a match for that under his rebellious officer. He was indefatigable in his exertions, visiting every part of the island, and straining all his resources to effect his purpose. The preparations were on a scale that necessarily consumed many months.

Meanwhile the little vessel was speeding her prosperous way across the waters, and, after touching at one of the Azores, came safely into the harbor of St. Lucar, in the month of October. However long it may appear in the more perfect nautical science of our day, it was reckoned a fair voyage for that. Of what befell the commissioners on their arrival, their reception at court, and the sensation caused by their intelligence, I defer the account to a future chapter.[16]

Shortly after the departure of the commissioners, an affair occurred of a most unpleasant nature. A number of persons, with the priest Juan Diaz at their head, ill-affected, from some cause or other, towards the administration of Cortés, or not relishing the hazardous expedition before them, laid a plan to seize one of the vessels, make the best of their way to Cuba, and report to the governor the fate of the armament. It was conducted with so much secrecy that the party had got their provisions, water, and everything neces-

[16] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 54–57.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 40.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 14.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Martyr's copious information was chiefly derived from his conversations with Alaminos and the two envoys, on their arrival at court. De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 6, et alibi; also Idem, Opus Epistolarum (Amstelodami, 1670), ep. 650.

sary for the voyage, on board, without detection; when the conspiracy was betrayed, on the very night they were to sail, by one of their own number, who repented the part he had taken in it. The general caused the persons implicated to be instantly apprehended. An examination was instituted. The guilt of the parties was placed beyond a doubt. Sentence of death was passed on two of the ringleaders; another, the pilot, was condemned to lose his feet, and several others to be whipped. The priest, probably the most guilty of the whole, claiming the usual benefit of clergy, was permitted to escape. One of those condemned to the gallows was named Escudero, the very alguacil who, the reader may remember, so stealthily apprehended Cortés before the sanctuary in Cuba.[17] The general, on signing the death-warrants, was heard to exclaim, "Would that I had never learned to write!" It was not the first time, it was remarked, that the exclamation had been uttered in similar circumstances.[18]

The arrangements being now finally settled at the Villa Rica, Cortés sent forward Alvarado, with a large part of the army, to Cempoalla, where he soon after joined them with the remainder. The late affair of the conspiracy seems to have made a deep impression on his mind. It showed him that

[17] See Vol. I, p. 306.

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 57.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Demanda de Narvaez, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 41.—It was the exclamation of Nero, as reported by Suetonius. "Et cum de supplicio cujusdam capite damnati ut ex more subscriberet, admoneretur, 'Quam vellem,' inquit, 'nescire literas!'" Lib. 6, cap. 10.

there were timid spirits in the camp on whom he could not rely, and who, he feared, might spread the seeds of disaffection among their companions. Even the more resolute, on any occasion of disgust or disappointment hereafter, might falter in purpose, and, getting possession of the vessels, abandon the enterprise. This was already too vast, and the odds were too formidable, to authorize expectation of success with diminution of numbers. Experience showed that this was always to be apprehended while means of escape were at hand.[19] The best chance for success was to cut off these means. He came to the daring resolution to destroy the fleet, without the knowledge of his army.

When arrived at Cempoalla, he communicated his design to a few of his devoted adherents, who entered warmly into his views. Through them he readily persuaded the pilots, by means of those golden arguments which weigh more than any other with ordinary minds, to make such a report of the condition of the fleet as suited his purpose. The ships, they said, were grievously racked by the heavy gales they had encountered, and, what was worse, the worms had eaten into their sides and bottoms until most of them were not seaworthy, and some, indeed, could scarcely now be kept afloat.

[19] "Y porque," says Cortés, "demas de los que por ser criados y amigos de Diego Velasquez tenian voluntad de salir de la Tierra, habia otros, que por verla tan grande, y de tanta gente, y tal, y ver los pocos Españoles que eramos, estaban del mismo propósito; creyendo, que si allí los navíos dejasse, se me alzarian con ellos, y yéndose todos los que de esta voluntad estavan, yo quedaria casi solo."

Cortés received the communication with surprise; "for he could well dissemble," observes Las Casas, with his usual friendly comment, "when it suited his interests." "If it be so," he exclaimed, "we must make the best of it! Heaven's will be done!" [20] He then ordered five of the worst conditioned to be dismantled, their cordage, sails, iron, and whatever was movable, to be brought on shore, and the ships to be sunk. A survey was made of the others, and, on a similar report, four more were condemned in the same manner. Only one small vessel remained!

When the intelligence reached the troops in Cempoalla, it caused the deepest consternation. They saw themselves cut off by a single blow from friends, family, country! The stoutest hearts quailed before the prospect of being thus abandoned on a hostile shore, a handful of men arrayed against a formidable empire. When the news arrived of the destruction of the five vessels first condemned, they had acquiesced in it as a necessary measure, knowing the mischievous activity of the insects in these tropical seas. But, when this was followed by the loss of the remaining four, suspicions of the truth flashed on their minds. They felt they were betrayed. Murmurs, at first deep, swelled louder and louder, menacing open mutiny. "Their general," they said, "had led them like cattle to be butchered in the sham-

[20] "Mostró quando se lo dixéron mucho sentimiento Cortés, porque savia bien haçer fingimientos quando le era provechoso, y rrespondióles que mirasen vien en ello, é que si no estavan para navegar que diesen gracias á Dios por ello, pues no se podia hacer mas." Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

bles!" [21] The affair wore a most alarming aspect. In no situation was Cortés ever exposed to greater danger from his soldiers.[22]

His presence of mind did not desert him at this crisis. He called his men together, and, employing the tones of persuasion rather than authority, assured them that a survey of the ships showed they were not fit for service. If he had ordered them to be destroyed, they should consider, also, that his was the greatest sacrifice, for they were his property,—all, indeed, he possessed in the world. The troops, on the other hand, would derive one great advantage from it, by the addition of a hundred able-bodied recruits, before required to man the vessels. But, even if the fleet had been saved, it could have been of little service in their present expedition; since they would not need it if they succeeded, while they would be too far in the interior to profit by it if they failed. He besought them to turn their thoughts in another direction. To be thus calculating chances and means of escape was unworthy of brave souls. They had set their hands to the work; to look back, as they advanced, would be their ruin. They had only to resume their former confidence in themselves and their general, and success was certain. "As for me," he concluded, "I have chosen my part. I will remain here, while there is one to bear

[21] "Decian, que los queria meter en el matadero." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 42.

[22] "Al cavo lo ovieron de sentir la gente y ayna se le amotinaran muchos, y esta fué uno de los peligros que pasaron por Cortés de muchos que para matallo de los mismos Españoles estuvo." Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

me company. If there be any so craven as to shrink from sharing the dangers of our glorious enterprise, let them go home, in God's name. There is still one vessel left. Let them take that and return to Cuba. They can tell there how they deserted their commander and their comrades, and patiently wait till we return loaded with the spoils of the Aztecs." [23]

The politic orator had touched the right chord in the bosoms of the soldiers. As he spoke, their resentment gradually died away. The faded visions of future riches and glory, rekindled by his eloquence, again floated before their imaginations. The first shock over, they felt ashamed of their temporary distrust. The enthusiasm for their leader revived, for they felt that under his banner only they could hope for victory; and, as he concluded, they testified the revulsion of their feelings by making the air ring with their shouts, " To Mexico! to Mexico! "

The destruction of his fleet by Cortés is, perhaps, the most remarkable passage in the life of this remarkable man. History, indeed, affords examples of a similar expedient in emergencies somewhat similar; but none where the chances of success were so precarious and defeat would be so disastrous.[24] Had he failed, it might well seem

[23] " Que ninguno seria tan cobarde y tan pusilánime que queria estimar su vida mas que la suya, ni de tan debil corazon que dudase de ir con él á México, donde tanto bien le estaba aparejado, y que si acaso se determinaba alguno de dejar de hacer este se podia ir bendito de Dios á Cuba en el navío que habia dexado, de que antes de mucho se arrepentiria, y pelaria las barbas, viendo la buena ventura que esperaba le sucederia." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.

[24] Perhaps the most remarkable of these examples is that of Julian,

CORTÉS SINKING HIS SHIPS

CORTES BURNING HIS SHIPS.

Gérard & Cie Paris

an act of madness. Yet it was the fruit of deliberate calculation. He had set fortune, fame, life itself, all upon the cast, and must abide the issue. There was no alternative in his mind but to succeed or perish. The measure he adopted greatly increased the chance of success. But to carry it into execution, in the face of an incensed and desperate soldiery, was an act of resolution that has few parallels in history.[25]

who, in his unfortunate Assyrian invasion, burnt the fleet which had carried him up the Tigris. The story is told by Gibbon, who shows very satisfactorily that the fleet would have proved a hinderance rather than a help to the emperor in his further progress. See History of the Decline and Fall, vol. ix. p. 177, of Milman's excellent edition.

[25] The account given in the text of the destruction of the fleet is not that of Bernal Diaz, who states it to have been accomplished not only with the knowledge, but entire approbation of the army, though at the suggestion of Cortés. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 58.) This version is sanctioned by Dr. Robertson (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 253, 254.) One should be very slow to depart from the honest record of the old soldier, especially when confirmed by the discriminating judgment of the Historian of America. But Cortés expressly declares in his letter to the emperor that he ordered the vessels to be sunk, without the knowledge of his men, from the apprehension that, if the means of escape were open, the timid and disaffected might at some future time avail themselves of them. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 41.) The cavaliers Montejo and Puertocarrero, on their visit to Spain, stated, in their depositions, that the general destroyed the fleet on information received from the pilots. (Declaraciones, MSS.) Narvaez in his accusation of Cortés, and Las Casas, speak of the act in terms of unqualified reprobation, charging him, moreover, with bribing the pilots to bore holes in the bottoms of the ships in order to disable them. (Demanda de Narvaez, MS.—Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.) The same account of the transaction, though with a very different commentary as to its merits, is repeated by Oviedo (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2), Gomara (Crónica, cap. 42), and Peter Martyr (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1), all of whom had access to the best sources of information. The affair, so remarkable as the act of one individual, becomes absolutely incredible when considered as the result of so many independent wills. It is not improbable that Bernal Diaz, from his known devotion to the cause,

may have been one of the few to whom Cortés confided his purpose. The veteran, in writing his narrative, many years after, may have mistaken a part for the whole, and in his zeal to secure to the army a full share of the glory of the expedition, too exclusively appropriated by the general (a great object, as he tells us, of his history), may have distributed among his comrades the credit of an exploit which, in this instance, at least, properly belonged to their commander. Whatever be the cause of the discrepancy, his solitary testimony can hardly be sustained against the weight of contemporary evidence from such competent sources.*

* [Prescott's account of the circumstances attending the destruction of the fleet has been contested at great length by Señor Ramirez, who insists on accepting the statements of Bernal Diaz without qualification and ascribing to the army an equal share with the general in the merit of the act. He remarks with truth that the language of Cortés—"Tuve manera, como so color que los dichos navíos no estaban para navegar, los eché á la costa"—contains no *express declaration,* as stated by Prescott, that the order for the fleet to be sunk was given without the knowledge of the army, but would, at the most, lead to an inference to that effect. "Nor can even this," he adds, "be admitted, since, in order to persuade the soldiers that the ships were unfit for sailing, he must have had an understanding with the mariners who were to make the statement, and with his friends who were to confirm it." This is, however, very inefficient reasoning. It is not pretended that Cortés had no confidants and agents in the transaction. The question of real importance is, Was the resolution taken, as Bernal Diaz asserts, *openly and by the advice* of the whole army,—"claramente, por consejo de todos los demas soldados"?—or was it formed by Cortés, and were measures taken for giving effect to it, without any communication with the mass of his followers? The newly discovered relation of Tápia is cited by Señor Ramirez as "in perfect accordance with the testimony of Diaz and destructive of every supposition of mystery and secrecy." Yet Tápia says, with Herrera, that Cortés caused holes to be bored in the ships and their unserviceable condition to be reported to him, and thereupon gave orders for their destruction; no mention being made of the concurrence of the soldiers at any stage of the proceedings.—K.]

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Bishop of Chiapa, whose "History of the Indies" forms an important authority for the preceding pages, was one of the most remarkable men of the sixteenth century. He was born at Seville in 1474. His father accompanied Columbus, as a common soldier, in his first voyage to the New World; and he acquired wealth enough by his vocation to place his son at the University of Salamanca. During his residence there, he was attended by an Indian page, whom his father had brought with him from Hispaniola. Thus the uncompromising advocate for freedom began

his career as the owner of a slave himself. But he did not long remain so, for his slave was one of those subsequently liberated by the generous commands of Isabella.

In 1498 he completed his studies in law and divinity, took his degree of licentiate, and in 1502 accompanied Oviedo, in the most brilliant armada which had been equipped for the Western World. Eight years after, he was admitted to priest's orders in St. Domingo, an event somewhat memorable, since he was the first person consecrated in that holy office in the colonies. On the occupation of Cuba by the Spaniards, Las Casas passed over to that island, where he obtained a curacy in a small settlement. He soon, however, made himself known to the governor, Velasquez, by the fidelity with which he discharged his duties, and especially by the influence which his mild and benevolent teaching obtained for him over the Indians. Through his intimacy with the governor, Las Casas had the means of ameliorating the condition of the conquered race, and from this time he may be said to have consecrated all his energies to this one great object. At this period, the scheme of *repartimientos,* introduced soon after the discoveries of Columbus, was in full operation, and the aboriginal population of the islands was rapidly melting away under a system of oppression which has been seldom paralleled in the annals of mankind. Las Casas, outraged at the daily exhibition of crime and misery, returned to Spain to obtain some redress from government. Ferdinand died soon after his arrival. Charles was absent, but the reins were held by Cardinal Ximenes, who listened to the complaints of the benevolent missionary, and, with his characteristic vigor, instituted a commission of three Hieronymite friars, with full authority, as already noticed in the text, to reform abuses. Las Casas was honored, for his exertions, with the title of "Protector-General of the Indians."

The new commissioners behaved with great discretion. But their office was one of consummate difficulty, as it required time to introduce important changes in established institutions. The ardent and impetuous temper of Las Casas, disdaining every consideration of prudence, overleaped all these obstacles, and chafed under what he considered the lukewarm and temporizing policy of the commissioners. As he was at no pains to conceal his disgust, the parties soon came to a misunderstanding with each other; and Las Casas again returned to the mother-country, to stimulate the government, if possible, to more effectual measures for the protection of the natives.

He found the country under the administration of the Flemings, who discovered from the first a wholesome abhorrence of the abuses practised in the colonies, and who, in short, seemed inclined to tolerate no peculation or extortion but their own. They acquiesced, without much difficulty, in the recommendations of Las Casas, who proposed to relieve the natives by sending out Castilian laborers and by importing negro slaves into the islands. This last proposition has

brought heavy obloquy on the head of its author, who has been freely accused of having thus introduced negro slavery into the New World. Others, with equal groundlessness, have attempted to vindicate his memory from the reproach of having recommended the measure at all. Unfortunately for the latter assertion, Las Casas, in his "History of the Indies," confesses, with deep regret and humiliation, his advice on this occasion, founded on the most erroneous views, as he frankly states; since, to use his own words, "the same law applies equally to the negro as to the Indian." But, so far from having introduced slavery by this measure into the islands, the importation of blacks there dates from the beginning of the century. It was recommended by some of the wisest and most benevolent persons in the colony, as the means of diminishing the amount of human suffering; since the African was more fitted by his constitution to endure the climate and the severe toil imposed on the slave, than the feeble and effeminate islander. It was a suggestion of humanity, however mistaken, and, considering the circumstances under which it occurred, and the age, it may well be forgiven in Las Casas, especially taking into view that, as he became more enlightened himself, he was so ready to testify his regret at having unadvisedly countenanced the measure.

The experiment recommended by Las Casas was made, but, through the apathy of Fonseca, president of the Indian Council, not heartily, —and it failed. The good missionary now proposed another and much bolder scheme. He requested that a large tract of country in Tierra Firme, in the neighborhood of the famous pearl-fisheries, might be ceded to him for the purpose of planting a colony there, and of converting the natives to Christianity. He required that none of the authorities of the islands, and no military force, especially, should be allowed to interfere with his movements. He pledged himself by peaceful means alone to accomplish all that had been done by violence in other quarters. He asked only that a certain number of laborers should attend him, invited by a bounty from government, and that he might further be accompanied by fifty Dominicans, who were to be distinguished like himself by a peculiar dress, that should lead the natives to suppose them a different race of men from the Spaniards. This proposition was denounced as chimerical and fantastic by some, whose own opportunities of observation entitled their judgment to respect. These men declared the Indian, from his nature, incapable of civilization. The question was one of such moment that Charles the Fifth ordered the discussion to be conducted before him. The opponent of Las Casas was first heard, when the good missionary, in answer, warmed by the noble cause he was to maintain, and nothing daunted by the august presence in which he stood, delivered himself with a fervent eloquence that went directly to the hearts of his auditors. "The Christian religion," he concluded, "is equal in its operation, and is accommodated to every nation on the globe. It robs no one of his freedom,

violates none of his inherent rights, on the ground that he is a slave by nature, as pretended; and it well becomes your Majesty to banish so monstrous an oppression from your kingdom in the beginning of your reign, that the Almighty may make it long and glorious."

In the end Las Casas prevailed. He was furnished with the men and means for establishing his colony, and in 1520 embarked for America. But the result was a lamentable failure. The country assigned to him lay in the neighborhood of a Spanish settlement, which had already committed some acts of violence on the natives. To quell the latter, now thrown into commotion, an armed force was sent by the young "Admiral" from Hispaniola. The very people, among whom Las Casas was to appear as the messenger of peace, were thus involved in deadly strife with his countrymen. The enemy had been before him in his own harvest. While waiting for the close of these turbulent scenes, the laborers, whom he had taken out with him, dispersed, in despair of effecting their object. And after an attempt to pursue, with his faithful Dominican brethren, the work of colonization further, other untoward circumstances compelled them to abandon the project altogether. Its unfortunate author, overwhelmed with chagrin, took refuge in the Dominican monastery in the island of Hispaniola. The failure of the enterprise should, no doubt, be partly ascribed to circumstances beyond the control of its projector. Yet it is impossible not to recognize in the whole scheme, and in the conduct of it, the hand of one much more familiar with books than men, who, in the seclusion of the cloister, had meditated and matured his benevolent plans, without fully estimating the obstacles that lay in their way, and who counted too confidently on meeting the same generous enthusiasm in others which glowed in his own bosom.

He found, in his disgrace, the greatest consolation and sympathy from the brethren of St. Dominic, who stood forth as the avowed champions of the Indians on all occasions, and showed themselves as devoted to the cause of freedom in the New World as they had been hostile to it in the Old. Las Casas soon became a member of their order, and, in his monastic retirement, applied himself for many years to the performance of his spiritual duties, and the composition of various works, all directed, more or less, to vindicate the rights of the Indians. Here, too, he commenced his great work the "Historia general de las Indias," which he pursued, at intervals of leisure, from 1527 till a few years before his death. His time, however, was not wholly absorbed by these labors; and he found means to engage in several laborious missions. He preached the gospel among the natives of Nicaragua and Guatemala, and succeeded in converting and reducing to obedience some wild tribes in the latter province, who had defied the arms of his countrymen. In all these pious labors he was sustained by his Dominican brethren. At length, in 1539, he crossed the waters again, to seek further assistance and recruits among the members of his order.

A great change had taken place in the board that now presided over the colonial department. The cold and narrow-minded Fonseca, who, during his long administration, had, it may be truly said, shown himself the enemy of every great name and good measure connected with the Indians, had died. His place, as president of the Indian Council, was filled by Loaysa, Charles's confessor. This functionary, general of the Dominicans, gave ready audience to Las Casas, and showed a good will to his proposed plans of reform. Charles, too, now grown older, seemed to feel more deeply the responsibility of his station, and the necessity of redressing the wrongs, too long tolerated, of his American subjects. The state of the colonies became a common topic of discussion, not only in the council, but in the court; and the representations of Las Casas made an impression that manifested itself in the change of sentiment more clearly every day. He promoted this by the publication of some of his writings at this time, and especially of his "Brevísima Relacion," or Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, in which he sets before the reader the manifold atrocities committed by his countrymen in different parts of the New World in the prosecution of their conquests. It is a tale of woe. Every line of the work may be said to be written in blood. However good the motives of its author, we may regret that the book was ever written. He would have been certainly right not to spare his countrymen; to exhibit their misdeeds in their true colors, and by this appalling picture—for such it would have been—to have recalled the nation, and those who governed it, to a proper sense of the iniquitous career it was pursuing on the other side of the water. But, to produce a more striking effect, he has lent a willing ear to every tale of violence and rapine, and magnified the amount to a degree which borders on the ridiculous. The wild extravagance of his numerical estimates is of itself sufficient to shake confidence in the accuracy of his statements generally. Yet the naked truth was too startling in itself to demand the aid of exaggeration. The book found great favor with foreigners; was rapidly translated into various languages, and ornamented with characteristic designs, which seemed to put into action all the recorded atrocities of the text. It excited somewhat different feelings in his own countrymen, particularly the people of the colonies, who considered themselves the subjects of a gross, however undesigned, misrepresentation; and in his future intercourse with them it contributed, no doubt, to diminish his influence and consequent usefulness, by the spirit of alienation, and even resentment, which it engendered.

Las Casas' honest intentions, his enlightened views and long experience, gained him deserved credit at home. This was visible in the important regulations made at this time for the better government of the colonies, and particularly in respect to the aborigines. A code of laws, *Las Nuevas Leyes,* was passed, having for their avowed object the enfranchisement of this unfortunate race; and in

the wisdom and humanity of its provisions it is easy to recognize the hand of the Protector of the Indians. The history of Spanish colonial legislation is the history of the impotent struggles of the government in behalf of the natives, against the avarice and cruelty of its subjects. It proves that an empire powerful at home—and Spain then was so—may be so widely extended that its authority shall scarcely be felt in its extremities.

The government testified their sense of the signal services of Las Casas by promoting him to the bishopric of Cuzco, one of the richest sees in the colonies. But the disinterested soul of the missionary did not covet riches or preferment. He rejected the proffered dignity without hesitation. Yet he could not refuse the bishopric of Chiapa, a country which, from the poverty and ignorance of its inhabitants, offered a good field for his spiritual labors. In 1544, though at the advanced age of seventy, he took upon himself these new duties, and embarked, for the fifth and last time, for the shores of America. His fame had preceded him. The colonists looked on his coming with apprehension, regarding him as the real author of the new code, which struck at their ancient immunities, and which he would be likely to enforce to the letter. Everywhere he was received with coldness. In some places his person was menaced with violence. But the venerable presence of the prelate, his earnest expostulations, which flowed so obviously from conviction, and his generous self-devotion, so regardless of personal considerations, preserved him from this outrage. Yet he showed no disposition to conciliate his opponents by what he deemed an unworthy concession; and he even stretched the arm of authority so far as to refuse the sacraments to any who still held an Indian in bondage. This high-handed measure not only outraged the planters, but incurred the disapprobation of his own brethren in the Church. Three years were spent in disagreeable altercation without coming to any decision. The Spaniards, to borrow their accustomed phraseology on these occasions, "obeying the law, but not fulfilling it," applied to the court for further instructions; and the bishop, no longer supported by his own brethren, thwarted by the colonial magistrates, and outraged by the people, relinquished a post where his presence could be no longer useful, and returned to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity at home.

Yet, though withdrawn to his Dominican convent, he did not pass his hours in slothful seclusion. He again appeared as the champion of Indian freedom in the famous controversy with Sepulveda, one of the most acute scholars of the time, and far surpassing Las Casas in elegance and correctness of composition. But the Bishop of Chiapa was his superior in argument, at least in this discussion, where he had right and reason on his side. In his "Thirty Propositions," as they are called, in which he sums up the several points of his case, he maintains that the circumstance of infidelity in religion cannot deprive a nation of its political rights; that the Holy

See, in its grant of the New World to the Catholic sovereigns, designed only to confer the right of converting its inhabitants to Christianity, and of thus winning a peaceful authority over them, and that no authority could be valid which rested on other foundations. This was striking at the root of the colonial empire as assumed by Castile. But the disinterested views of Las Casas, the respect entertained for his principles, and the general conviction, it may be, of the force of his arguments, prevented the court from taking umbrage at their import, or from pressing them to their legitimate conclusion. While the writings of his adversary were interdicted from publication, he had the satisfaction to see his own printed and circulated in every quarter.

From this period his time was distributed among his religious duties, his studies, and the composition of his works, especially his History. His constitution, naturally excellent, had been strengthened by a life of temperance and toil; and he retained his faculties unimpaired to the last. He died after a short illness, July, 1566, at the great age of ninety-two, in his monastery of Atocha, at Madrid.

The character of Las Casas may be inferred from his career. He was one of those to whose gifted minds are revealed those glorious moral truths which, like the lights of heaven, are fixed and the same forever, but which, though now familiar, were hidden from all but a few penetrating intellects by the general darkness of the time in which he lived. He was a reformer, and had the virtues and errors of a reformer. He was inspired by one great and glorious idea. This was the key to all his thoughts, to all that he said and wrote, to every act of his long life. It was this which urged him to lift the voice of rebuke in the presence of princes, to brave the menaces of an infuriated populace, to cross seas, to traverse mountains and deserts, to incur the alienation of friends, the hostility of enemies, to endure obloquy, insult, and persecution. It was this, too, which made him reckless of obstacles, led him to count too confidently on the co-operation of others, animated his discussion, sharpened his invective, too often steeped his pen in the gall of personal vituperation, led him into gross exaggeration and over-coloring in his statements and a blind credulity of evil that rendered him unsafe as a counsellor and unsuccessful in the practical concerns of life. His views were pure and elevated. But his manner of enforcing them was not always so commendable. This may be gathered not only from the testimony of the colonists generally, who, as parties interested, may be supposed to have been prejudiced, but from that of the members of his own profession, persons high in office, and of integrity beyond suspicion, not to add that of missionaries engaged in the same good work with himself. These, in their letters and reported conversations, charged the Bishop of Chiapa with an arrogant, uncharitable temper, which deluded his judgment, and vented itself in unwarrantable crimination against such as resisted his

projects or differed from him in opinion. Las Casas, in short, was a man. But, if he had the errors of humanity, he had virtues that rarely belong to it. The best commentary on his character is the estimation which he obtained in the court of his sovereign. A liberal pension was settled on him after his last return from America, which he chiefly expended on charitable objects. No measure of importance relating to the Indians was taken without his advice. He lived to see the fruits of his efforts in the positive amelioration of their condition, and in the popular admission of those great truths which it had been the object of his life to unfold. And who shall say how much of the successful efforts and arguments since made in behalf of persecuted humanity may be traced to the example and the writings of this illustrious philanthropist?

His compositions were numerous, most of them of no great length. Some were printed in his time; others have since appeared, especially in the French translation of Llorente. His great work, which occupied him at intervals for more than thirty years, the *Historia general de las Indias,* still remains in manuscript. It is in three volumes, divided into as many parts, and embraces the colonial history from the discovery of the country by Columbus to the year 1520. The style of the work, like that of all his writings, is awkward, disjointed, and excessively diffuse, abounding in repetitions, irrelevant digressions, and pedantic citations. But it is sprinkled over with passages of a different kind; and, when he is roused by the desire to exhibit some gross wrong to the natives, his simple language kindles into eloquence, and he expounds those great and immutable principles of natural justice which in his own day were so little understood. His defect as a historian is that he wrote history, like everything else, under the influence of one dominant idea. He is always pleading the cause of the persecuted native. This gives a coloring to events which passed under his own eyes, and filled him with a too easy confidence in those which he gathered from the reports of others. Much of the preceding portion of our narrative which relates to affairs in Cuba must have come under his personal observation. But he seems incapable of shaking off his early deference to Velasquez, who, as we have noticed, treated him, while a poor curate in the island, with peculiar confidence. For Cortés, on the other hand, he appears to have felt a profound contempt. He witnessed the commencement of his career, when he was standing, cap in hand, as it were, at the proud governor's door, thankful even for a smile of recognition. Las Casas remembered all this, and, when he saw the Conqueror of Mexico rise into a glory and renown that threw his former patron into the shade,—and most unfairly, as Las Casas deemed, at the expense of that patron,—the good bishop could not withhold his indignation, nor speak of him otherwise than with a sneer, as a mere upstart adventurer.

It is the existence of defects like these, and the fear of the misconception likely to be produced by them, that have so long pre-

vented the publication of his history. At his death, he left it to the convent of San Gregorio, at Valladolid, with directions that it should not be printed for forty years, nor be seen during that time by any layman or member of the fraternity. Herrera, however, was permitted to consult it, and he liberally transferred its contents to his own volumes, which appeared in 1601. The royal Academy of History revised the first volume of Las Casas some years since, with a view to the publication of the whole work. But the indiscreet and imaginative style of the composition, according to Navarrete, and the consideration that its most important facts were already known through other channels, induced that body to abandon the design. With deference to their judgment, this seems to me a mistake. Las Casas, with every deduction, is one of the great writers of the nation; great from the important truths which he discerned when none else could see them, and from the courage with which he proclaimed them to the world. They are scattered over his History as well as his other writings. They are not, however, the passages transcribed by Herrera. In the statement of fact, too, however partial and prejudiced, no one will impeach his integrity; and, as an enlightened contemporary, his evidence is of undeniable value. It is due to the memory of Las Casas that, if his work be given to the public at all, it should not be through the garbled extracts of one who was no fair interpreter of his opinions. Las Casas does not speak for himself in the courtly pages of Herrera. Yet the History should not be published without a suitable commentary to enlighten the student and guard him against any undue prejudices in the writer. We may hope that the entire manuscript will one day be given to the world under the auspices of that distinguished body which has already done so much in this way for the illustration of the national annals.*

The life of Las Casas has been several times written. The two memoirs most worthy of notice are that by Llorente, late Secretary of the Inquisition, prefixed to his French translation of the bishop's controversial writings, and that by Quintana, in the third volume of his "Españoles célebres," where it presents a truly noble specimen of biographical composition, enriched by a literary criticism as acute as it is candid. I have gone to the greater length in this notice, from the interesting character of the man, and the little that is known of him to the English reader. I have also transferred a passage from his work in the original to the Appendix, that the Spanish scholar may form an idea of his style of composition. He ceases to be an authority for us henceforth, as his account of the expedition of Cortés terminates with the destruction of the navy.

* [The Historia de las Indias was published in five volumes, in 1875–76, by the Royal Academy of History in Madrid. Prescott's manuscript copy of the work was probably burned in Boston in 1872.—M.]

BOOK III

MARCH TO MEXICO

BOOK III

MARCH TO MEXICO

CHAPTER I

PROCEEDINGS AT CEMPOALLA—THE SPANIARDS CLIMB THE TABLE-LAND—PICTURESQUE SCENERY—TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES—EMBASSY TO TLASCALA

1519

WHILE at Cempoalla, Cortés received a message from Escalante, his commander at Villa Rica, informing him there were four strange ships hovering off the coast, and that they took no notice of his repeated signals. This intelligence greatly alarmed the general, who feared they might be a squadron sent by the governor of Cuba to interfere with his movements. In much haste, he set out at the head of a few horsemen, and, ordering a party of light infantry to follow, posted back to Villa Rica. The rest of the army he left in charge of Alvarado and of Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young officer who had begun to give evidence of the uncommon qualities which have secured to him so distinguished a rank among the conquerors of Mexico.

Escalante would have persuaded the general, on his reaching the town, to take some rest, and allow him to go in search of the strangers. But Cortés replied with the homely proverb, "A wounded hare takes no nap," [1] and, without stopping to refresh himself or his men, pushed on three or four leagues to the north, where he understood the ships were at anchor. On the way, he fell in with three Spaniards, just landed from them. To his eager inquiries whence they came, they replied that they belonged to a squadron fitted out by Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica. This person, the year previous, had visited the Florida coast, and obtained from Spain—where he had some interest at court—authority over the countries he might discover in that vicinity. The three men, consisting of a notary and two witnesses, had been sent on shore to warn their countrymen under Cortés to desist from what was considered an encroachment on the territories of Garay. Probably neither the governor of Jamaica nor his officers had any precise notion of the geography and limits of these territories.

Cortés saw at once there was nothing to apprehend from this quarter. He would have been glad, however, if he could by any means have induced the crews of the ships to join his expedition. He found no difficulty in persuading the notary and his companions. But when he came in sight of the vessels, the people on board, distrusting the good terms on which their comrades appeared to be with the Spaniards, refused to send their boat

[1] "Cabra coja no tenga siesta."

ashore. In this dilemma, Cortés had recourse to a stratagem.

He ordered three of his own men to exchange dresses with the new-comers. He then drew off his little band in sight of the vessels, affecting to return to the city. In the night, however, he came back to the same place, and lay in ambush, directing the disguised Spaniards, when the morning broke, and they could be discerned, to make signals to those on board. The artifice succeeded. A boat put off, filled with armed men, and three or four leaped on shore. But they soon detected the deceit, and Cortés, springing from his ambush, made them prisoners. Their comrades in the boat, alarmed, pushed off, at once, for the vessels, which soon got under way, leaving those on shore to their fate. Thus ended the affair. Cortés returned to Cempoalla, with the addition of half a dozen able-bodied recruits, and, what was of more importance, relieved in his own mind from the apprehension of interference with his operations.[2]

He now made arrangements for his speedy departure from the Totonac capital. The forces reserved for the expedition amounted to about four hundred foot and fifteen horse, with seven pieces of artillery. He obtained, also, from the cacique of Cempoalla, thirteen hundred warriors, and a thousand *tamanes,* or porters, to drag the guns and transport the baggage. He took forty more of their principal men as hostages, as well as to

[2] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 42–45.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59, 60.

guide him on the way and serve him by their counsels among the strange tribes he was to visit. They were, in fact, of essential service to him throughout the march.[3]

The remainder of his Spanish force he left in garrison at Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, the command of which he had intrusted to the alguacil, Juan de Escalante, an officer devoted to his interests. The selection was judicious. It was important to place there a man who would resist any hostile interference from his European rivals, on the one hand, and maintain the present friendly relations with the natives, on the other. Cortés recommended the Totonac chiefs to apply to this officer in case of any difficulty, assuring them that so long as they remained faithful to their new sovereign and religion they should find a sure protection in the Spaniards.

Before marching, the general spoke a few words of encouragement to his own men. He told them they were now to embark in earnest on an enterprise which had been the great object of their desires, and that the blessed Saviour would carry them victorious through every battle with their enemies. "Indeed," he added, "this assurance must be our stay, for every other refuge is now cut off but that afforded by the providence of God

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.—The number of the Indian auxiliaries stated in the text is much larger than that allowed by either Cortés or Diaz. But both these actors in the drama show too obvious a desire to magnify their own prowess, by exaggerating the numbers of their foes and diminishing their own, to be entitled to much confidence in their estimates.

and your own stout hearts." [4] He ended by comparing their achievements to those of the ancient Romans, "in phrases of honeyed eloquence far beyond anything I can repeat," says the brave and simple-hearted chronicler who heard them. Cortés was, indeed, master of that eloquence which went to the soldiers' hearts. For their sympathies were his, and he shared in that romantic spirit of adventure which belonged to them. "We are ready to obey you," they cried as with one voice. "Our fortunes, for better or worse, are cast with yours." [5] Taking leave, therefore, of their hospitable Indian friends, the little army, buoyant with high hopes and lofty plans of conquest, set forward on their march to Mexico.

It was the sixteenth of August, 1519. During the first day, their road lay through the *tierra caliente,* the beautiful land where they had been so long lingering; the land of the vanilla, cochineal, cacao (not till later days of the orange and the sugar-cane), products which, indigenous to Mexico, have now become the luxuries of Europe; the land where the fruits and the flowers chase one another in unbroken circle through the year; where the gales are loaded with perfumes till the sense aches at their sweetness, and the groves are filled with many-colored birds, and insects whose enamelled wings glisten like diamonds in the bright sun of the tropics. Such are the magical splendors of

[4] "No teniamos otro socorro, ni ayuda sino el de Dios; porque ya no teniamos nauíos para ir á Cuba, salvo nuestro buen pelear y coraçones fuertes." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59.

[5] "Y todos á vna le respondímos, que hariamos lo que ordenasse, que echada estaua la suerte de la buena ó mala ventura." Loc. cit.

this paradise of the senses. Yet Nature, who generally works in a spirit of compensation, has provided one here; since the same burning sun which quickens into life these glories of the vegetable and animal kingdoms calls forth the pestilent *malaria,* with its train of bilious disorders, unknown to the cold skies of the North. The season in which the Spaniards were there, the rainy months of summer, was precisely that in which the *vómito* rages with greatest fury; when the European stranger hardly ventures to set his foot on shore, still less to linger there a day. We find no mention made of it in the records of the Conquerors, nor any notice, indeed, of an uncommon mortality. The fact doubtless corroborates the theory of those who postpone the appearance of the yellow fever till long after the occupation of the country by the whites. It proves, at least, that, if existing before, it must have been in a very much mitigated form.

After some leagues of travel over roads made nearly impassable by the summer rains, the troops began the gradual ascent—more gradual on the eastern than the western declivities of the Cordilleras—which leads up to the table-land of Mexico. At the close of the second day they reached Xalapa, a place still retaining the same Aztec name that it has communicated to the drug raised in its environs, the medicinal virtues of which are now known throughout the world.[6] This town stands

[6] Jalap, *Convolvulus jalapa.* The *x* and *j* are convertible consonants in the Castilian.*

* [Jalapa means "Spring in the Sand."—M.]

midway up the long ascent, at an elevation where the vapors from the ocean, touching in their westerly progress, maintain a rich verdure throughout the year. Though somewhat infected by these marine fogs, the air is usually bland and salubrious. The wealthy resident of the lower regions retires here for safety in the heats of summer, and the traveller hails its groves of oak with delight, as announcing that he is above the deadly influence of the *vómito.*[1] From this delicious spot, the Spaniards enjoyed one of the grandest prospects in nature. Before them was the steep ascent—much steeper after this point—which they were to climb. On the right rose the Sierra Madre, girt with its dark belt of pines, and its long lines of shadowy hills stretching away in the distance. To the south, in brilliant contrast, stood the mighty Orizaba, with his white robe of snow descending far down his sides, towering in solitary grandeur, the giant spectre of the Andes. Behind them, they beheld, unrolled at their feet, the magnificent *tierra caliente,* with its gay confusion of meadows, streams, and flowering forests, sprinkled over with shining Indian villages, while a faint line of light on the edge of the horizon told them that there was the ocean, beyond which were the kindred and country they were many of them never more to see.

Still winding their way upward, amidst scenery

[1] The heights of Xalapa are crowned with a convent dedicated to St. Francis, erected in later days by Cortés, showing, in its solidity, like others of the period built under the same auspices, says an agreeable traveller, a military as well as religious design. Tudor's Travels in North America (London, 1834), vol. ii. p. 186.

as different as was the temperature from that of the regions below, the army passed through settlements containing some hundreds of inhabitants each, and on the fourth day reached a "strong town," as Cortés terms it, standing on a rocky eminence, supposed to be that now known by the Mexican name of Naulinco. Here they were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants, who were friends of the Totonacs. Cortés endeavored, through Father Olmedo, to impart to them some knowledge of Christian truths, which were kindly received, and the Spaniards were allowed to erect a cross in the place, for the future adoration of the natives. Indeed, the route of the army might be tracked by these emblems of man's salvation, raised wherever a willing population of Indians invited it, suggesting a very different idea from what the same memorials intimate to the traveller in these mountain solitudes in our day.[8]

[8] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—"Every hundred yards of our route," says the traveller last quoted, speaking of this very region, "was marked by the melancholy erection of a wooden cross, denoting, according to the custom of the country, the commission of some horrible murder on the spot where it was planted." (Travels in North America, vol. ii. p. 188.)—[Señor Alaman stoutly defends his countrymen from this gross exaggeration, as he pronounces it, of Mr. Tudor. For although it is unhappily true, he says, that travellers were formerly liable to be attacked in going from the city of Mexico to Vera Cruz, and that the *diligence* which passes over this road is still frequently stopped, yet it is very seldom that personal violence is offered. "Foreign tourists are prone to believe all the stories of atrocities that are related to them, and generally, at inns, fall into the society of persons who take delight in furnishing a large supply of such materials. The crosses that are to be met with in the country are not so numerous as is pretended; nor are all of them memorials of assassinations committed in the places where they

The troops now entered a rugged defile, the Bishop's Pass,[9] as it is called, capable of easy defence against an army. Very soon they experienced a most unwelcome change of climate. Cold winds from the mountains, mingled with rain, and, as they rose still higher, with driving sleet and hail, drenched their garments, and seemed to penetrate to their very bones. The Spaniards, indeed, partially covered by their armor and thick jackets of quilted cotton, were better able to resist the weather, though their long residence in the sultry regions of the valley made them still keenly sensible to the annoyance. But the poor Indians, natives of the *tierra caliente,* with little protection in the way of covering, sank under the rude assault of the elements, and several of them perished on the road.

The aspect of the country was as wild and dreary as the climate. Their route wound along the spur of the huge Cofre de Perote, which borrows its name, both in Mexican and Castilian, from the coffer-like rock on its summit.[10] It is one of

have been erected. Many are merely objects of devotion, and others indicate the spot where two roads diverge from each other. We must, nevertheless, confess that this matter is one that demands all the attention of the government; while the candid foreigner will doubtless admit that it is not easy to exercise police supervision over roads on which the central points of population lie far apart, as in countries like ours, instead of being so near that a watch can be maintained from them over the intermediate spaces, as is the case in most countries of Europe and in a great part of the United States." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 251.]

[9] *El Paso del Obispo.* Cortés named it *Puerto del Nombre de Dios.* Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. ii.

[10] The Aztec name is Nauhcampatepetl, from *nauhcampa,* "anything square," and *tepetl,* "a mountain."—Humboldt, who waded through forests and snows to its summit, ascertained its height to

the great volcanoes of New Spain. It exhibits now, indeed, no vestige of a crater on its top, but abundant traces of volcanic action at its base, where acres of lava, blackened scoriæ, and cinders proclaim the convulsions of nature, while numerous shrubs and mouldering trunks of enormous trees, among the crevices, attest the antiquity of these events. Working their toilsome way across this scene of desolation, the path often led them along the borders of precipices, down whose sheer depths of two or three thousand feet the shrinking eye might behold another climate, and see all the glowing vegetation of the tropics choking up the bottom of the ravines.

After three days of this fatiguing travel, the wayworn army emerged through another defile, the *Sierra del Agua*.[11] They soon came upon an open reach of country, with a genial climate, such as belongs to the temperate latitudes of southern Europe. They had reached the level of more than seven thousand feet above the ocean, where the great sheet of table-land spreads out for hundreds of miles along the crests of the Cordilleras. The country showed signs of careful cultivation, but the products were, for the most part, not familiar to the eyes of the Spaniards. Fields and hedges of the various tribes of the cactus, the towering organum, and plantations of aloes with rich yellow clusters of flowers on their tall stems, affording drink and clothing to the Aztec, were everywhere

be 4089 metres,= 13,414 feet, above the sea. See his Vues des Cordillères, p. 234, and Essai politique, vol. i. p. 266.

[11] The same mentioned in Cortés' Letter as the *Puerto de la Leña*. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.

seen. The plants of the torrid and temperate zones had disappeared, one after another, with the ascent into these elevated regions. The glossy and dark-leaved banana, the chief, as it is the cheapest, aliment of the countries below, had long since faded from the landscape. The hardy maize, however, still shone with its golden harvest in all the pride of cultivation, the great staple of the higher equally with the lower terraces of the plateau.

Suddenly the troops came upon what seemed the environs of a populous city, which, as they entered it, appeared to surpass even that of Cempoalla in the size and solidity of its structures.[12] These were of stone and lime, many of them spacious and tolerably high. There were thirteen *teocallis* in the place; and in the suburbs they had seen a receptacle, in which, according to Bernal Diaz, were stored a hundred thousand skulls of human victims, all piled and ranged in order! He reports the number as one he had ascertained by counting them himself.[13] Whatever faith we may attach to the precise accuracy of his figures, the result is almost equally startling. The Spaniards were destined to become familiar with this appalling spectacle as they approached nearer to the Aztec capital.

[12] Now known by the euphonious Indian name of Tlatlanquitepec. (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iv.) It is the *Cocotlan* of Bernal Diaz. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.) The old Conquerors made sorry work with the Aztec names, both of places and persons, for which they must be allowed to have had ample excuse.

[13] "Puestos tantos rimeros de calaueras de muertos, que se podian bien contar, segun el concierto con que estauan puestas, que me parece que eran mas de cien mil, y digo otra vez sobre cien mil." Ibid., ubi supra.

The lord of the town ruled over twenty thousand vassals. He was tributary to Montezuma, and a strong Mexican garrison was quartered in the place. He had probably been advised of the approach of the Spaniards, and doubted how far it would be welcome to his sovereign. At all events, he gave them a cold reception, the more unpalatable after the extraordinary sufferings of the last few days. To the inquiry of Cortés, whether he were subject to Montezuma, he answered, with real or affected surprise, "Who is there that is not a vassal of Montezuma?"[14] The general told him, with some emphasis, that *he* was not. He then explained whence and why he came, assuring him that he served a monarch who had princes for his vassals as powerful as the Aztec monarch himself.

The cacique, in turn, fell nothing short of the Spaniard in the pompous display of the grandeur and resources of the Indian emperor. He told his guest that Montezuma could muster thirty great vassals, each master of a hundred thousand men![15] His revenues were immense, as every subject, however poor, paid something. They were all expended on his magnificent state and in support of

[14] "El qual casi admirado de lo que le preguntaba, me respondió, diciendo; ¿que quién no era vasallo de Muctezuma? queriendo decir, que allí era Señor del Mundo." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 47.

[15] "Tiene mas de 30 Príncipes á sí subjectos, que cada uno dellos tiene cient mill hombres é mas de pelea." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.) This marvellous tale is gravely repeated by more than one Spanish writer, in their accounts of the Aztec monarchy, not as the assertion of this chief, but as a veritable piece of statistics. See, among others, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 12.—Solís, Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 16.

his armies. These were continually in the field, while garrisons were maintained in most of the large cities of the empire. More than twenty thousand victims, the fruit of his wars, were annually sacrificed on the altars of his gods! His capital, the cacique said, stood in a lake, in the centre of a spacious valley. The lake was commanded by the emperor's vessels, and the approach to the city was by means of causeways, several miles long, connected in parts by wooden bridges, which, when raised, cut off all communication with the country. Some other things he added, in answer to queries of his guest, in which, as the reader may imagine, the crafty or credulous cacique varnished over the truth with a lively coloring of romance. Whether romance, or reality, the Spaniards could not determine. The particulars they gleaned were not of a kind to tranquillize their minds, and might well have made bolder hearts than theirs pause, ere they advanced. But far from it. "The words which we heard," says the stout old cavalier so often quoted, "however they may have filled us with wonder, made us—such is the temper of the Spaniard—only the more earnest to prove the adventure, desperate as it might appear." [16]

In a further conversation Cortés inquired of the chief whether his country abounded in gold, and intimated a desire to take home some, as specimens, to his sovereign. But the Indian lord declined to give him any, saying it might displease Monte-

[16] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.—There is a slight ground-swell of glorification in the Captain's narrative, which may provoke a smile,—not a sneer, for it is mingled with too much real courage and simplicity of character.

zuma. "Should he command it," he added, "my gold, my person, and all I possess, shall be at your disposal." The general did not press the matter further.

The curiosity of the natives was naturally excited by the strange dresses, weapons, horses, and dogs of the Spaniards. Marina, in satisfying their inquiries, took occasion to magnify the prowess of her adopted countrymen, expatiating on their exploits and victories, and stating the extraordinary marks of respect they had received from Montezuma. This intelligence seems to have had its effect; for soon after the cacique gave the general some curious trinkets of gold, of no great value, indeed, but as a testimony of his good will. He sent him, also, some female slaves to prepare bread for the troops, and supplied the means of refreshment and repose, more important to them, in the present juncture, than all the gold of Mexico.[17]

The Spanish general, as usual, did not neglect the occasion to inculcate the great truths of revelation on his host, and to display the atrocity of the Indian superstitions. The cacique listened with civil but cold indifference. Cortés, finding him unmoved, turned briskly round to his soldiers, exclaiming that now was the time to plant the Cross! They eagerly seconded his pious purpose, and the same scenes might have been enacted as at Cempoalla, with perhaps very different results,

[17] For the preceding pages, besides authorities cited in course, see Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44,—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 26.

had not Father Olmedo, with better judgment, interposed. He represented that to introduce the Cross among the natives, in their present state of ignorance and incredulity, would be to expose the sacred symbol to desecration so soon as the backs of the Spaniards were turned. The only way was to wait patiently the season when more leisure should be afforded to instil into their minds a knowledge of the truth. The sober reasoning of the good father prevailed over the passions of the martial enthusiasts.

It was fortunate for Cortés that Olmedo was not one of those frantic friars who would have fanned his fiery temper on such occasions into a blaze. It might have had a most disastrous influence on his fortunes; for he held all temporal consequences light in comparison with the great work of conversion, to effect which the unscrupulous mind of the soldier, trained to the stern discipline of the camp, would have employed force whenever fair means were ineffectual.[18] But Olmedo belonged to that class of benevolent missionaries —of whom the Roman Catholic church, to its credit, has furnished many examples—who rely on spiritual weapons for the great work, inculcating those doctrines of love and mercy which can best touch the sensibilities and win the affections of their rude audience. These, indeed, are the true weapons of the Church, the weapons employed in

[18] The general clearly belonged to the church militant, mentioned by Butler:

> "Such as do build their faith upon
> The holy text of pike and gun,
> And prove their doctrines orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks."

the primitive ages, by which it has spread its peaceful banners over the farthest regions of the globe. Such were not the means used by the conquerors of America, who, rather adopting the policy of the victorious Moslems in their early career, carried with them the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. They imposed obedience in matters of faith, no less than of government, on the vanquished, little heeding whether the conversion were genuine, so that it conformed to the outward observances of the Church. Yet the seeds thus recklessly scattered must have perished but for the missionaries of their own nation, who, in later times, worked over the same ground, living among the Indians as brethren, and, by long and patient culture, enabling the germs of truth to take root and fructify in their hearts.

The Spanish commander remained in the city four or five days, to recruit his fatigued and famished forces; and the modern Indians still point out, or did, at the close of the last century, a venerable cypress, under the branches of which was tied the horse of the *Conquistador*,—the Conqueror, as Cortés was styled, *par excellence*.[19] Their route now opened on a broad and verdant valley, watered by a noble stream,—a circumstance of not too frequent occurrence on the parched table-land of New Spain. The soil was well protected by woods,—a thing still rarer at the present

[19] "Arbol grande, dicho *ahuehuete*." (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.) The *cupressus disticha* of Linnæus. See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 54, note.

day; since the invaders, soon after the Conquest, swept away the magnificent growth of timber, rivalling that of our Southern and Western States in variety and beauty, which covered the plateau under the Aztecs.[20] *

All along the river, on both sides of it, an unbroken line of Indian dwellings, "so near as almost to touch one another," extended for three or four leagues; arguing a population much denser than at present.[21] On a rough and rising ground stood a town that might contain five or six thousand inhabitants, commanded by a fortress, which, with its walls and trenches, seemed to the Spaniards quite "on a level with similar works in Eu-

[20] It is the same taste which has made the Castiles, the table-land of the Peninsula, so naked of wood. Prudential reasons, as well as taste, however, seem to have operated in New Spain. A friend of mine on a visit to a noble *hacienda*, but uncommonly barren of trees, was informed by the proprietor that they were cut down to prevent the lazy Indians on the plantation from wasting their time by loitering in their shade!

[21] It confirms the observations of M. de Humboldt. "Sans doute lors de la première arrivée des Espagnols, toute cette côte, depuis la rivière de Papaloapan (Alvarado) jusqu'à Huaxtecapan, était plus habitée et mieux cultivée qu'elle ne l'est aujourd'hui. Cependant à mesure que les conquérans montèrent au plateau, ils trouvèrent les villages plus rapprochés les uns des autres, les champs divisés en portions plus petites, le peuple plus policé." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 202.

* [The amount of timber in Mexico at the time of the Conquest has been greatly overestimated. Humboldt complains of the Spaniards for cutting down trees. Yet Bernal Diaz says (cap. ccix.): "y han plantado sus tierras y heredades de todos los árboles y frutas que hemos traido de España, y venden el fruto que procede dello: y han puesto tantos árboles, que porque los duraznos no son buenos para la salud y los platanales les hacen mucha sombra, han cortado y cortan muchos, y lo ponen de membrilleros y manzanas, y perales, que los tienen en mas estima."—M.]

rope." Here the troops again halted, and met with friendly treatment.[22]

Cortés now determined his future line of march. At the last place he had been counselled by the natives to take the route of the ancient city of Cholula, the inhabitants of which, subjects of Montezuma, were a mild race, devoted to mechanical and other peaceful arts, and would be likely to entertain him kindly. Their Cempoallan allies, however, advised the Spaniards not to trust the Cholulans, "a false and perfidious people," but to take the road to Tlascala, that valiant little republic which had so long maintained its independence against the arms of Mexico. The people were frank as they were fearless, and fair in their dealings. They had always been on terms of amity with the Totonacs, which afforded a strong guarantee for their amicable disposition on the present occasion.

The arguments of his Indian allies prevailed with the Spanish commander, who resolved to propitiate the good will of the Tlascalans by an embassy. He selected four of the principal Cempoallans for this, and sent by them a martial gift,—a cap of crimson cloth, together with a sword and a cross-bow, weapons which, it was observed, excited general admiration among the natives. He added a letter, in which he asked permission to pass

[22] The correct Indian name of the town, *Yxtacamaxtitlan, Yztacmastitan* of Cortés, will hardly be recognized in the *Xalacingo* of Diaz. The town was removed, in 1601, from the top of the hill to the plain. On the original site are still visible remains of carved stones of large dimensions, attesting the elegance of the ancient fortress or palace of the cacique. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. v.

through their country. He expressed his admiration of the valor of the Tlascalans, and of their long resistance to the Aztecs, whose proud empire he designed to humble.[23] It was not to be expected that this epistle, indited in good Castilian, would be very intelligible to the Tlascalans. But Cortés communicated its import to the ambassadors. Its mysterious characters might impress the natives with an idea of superior intelligence, and the letter serve instead of those hieroglyphical missives which formed the usual credentials of an Indian ambassador.[24]

The Spaniards remained three days in this hospitable place, after the departure of the envoys, when they resumed their progress. Although in a friendly country, they marched always as if in a land of enemies, the horse and light troops in the van, with the heavy-armed and baggage in the rear, all in battle-array. They were never without their armor, waking or sleeping, lying down with their weapons by their sides. This unintermitting and restless vigilance was, perhaps, more oppressive to the spirits than even bodily fatigue. But they were confident in their superiority in a fair field, and felt that the most serious danger they had to fear from Indian warfare was surprise. "We are few against many, brave companions," Cortés would say to them; "be prepared, then, not as if

[23] "Estas cosas y otras de gran persuasion contenia la carta, pero como no sabian leer no pudieron entender lo que contenia." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[24] For an account of the diplomatic usages of the people of Anahuac, see *ante*, p. 57.

you were going to battle, but as if actually in the midst of it!" [25]

The road taken by the Spaniards was the same which at present leads to Tlascala; not that, however, usually followed in passing from Vera Cruz to the capital, which makes a circuit considerably to the south, towards Puebla, in the neighborhood of the ancient Cholula. They more than once forded the stream that rolls through this beautiful plain, lingering several days on the way, in hopes of receiving an answer from the Indian republic. The unexpected delay of the messengers could not be explained, and occasioned some uneasiness.

As they advanced into a country of rougher and bolder features, their progress was suddenly arrested by a remarkable fortification. It was a stone wall nine feet in height, and twenty in thickness, with a parapet, a foot and a half broad, raised on the summit for the protection of those who defended it. It had only one opening, in the centre, made by two semicircular lines of wall overlapping each other for the space of forty paces, and affording a passage-way between, ten paces wide, so contrived, therefore, as to be perfectly commanded by the inner wall. This fortification, which extended more than two leagues, rested at either end on the bold natural buttresses formed by the sierra. The work was built of immense blocks of stones nicely laid together without

[25] "Mira, señores compañeros, ya veis que somos pocos, hemos de estar siempre tan apercebidos, y aparejados, como si aora viessemos venir los contrarios á pelear, y no solamente vellos venir, sino hazer cuenta que estamos ya en la batalla con ellos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.

cement;[26] and the remains still existing, among which are rocks of the whole breadth of the rampart, fully attest its solidity and size.[27]

This singular structure marked the limits of Tlascala, and was intended, as the natives told the Spaniards, as a barrier against the Mexican invasions. The army paused, filled with amazement at the contemplation of this Cyclopean monument, which naturally suggested reflections on the strength and resources of the people who had raised it. It caused them, too, some painful solicitude as to the probable result of their mission to Tlascala, and their own consequent reception there. But they were too sanguine to allow such uncomfortable surmises long to dwell in their minds. Cortés put himself at the head of his cavalry, and, calling out, "Forward, soldiers, the Holy Cross is our banner, and under that we shall conquer," led his little army through the undefended passage, and in a few moments they trod the soil of the free republic of Tlascala.[28]

[26] According to the writer last cited, the stones were held by a cement so hard that the men could scarcely break it with their pikes. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.) But the contrary statement, in the general's letter, is confirmed by the present appearance of the wall. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.

[27] Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.—The attempts of the Archbishop to identify the route of Cortés have been very successful. It is a pity that his map illustrating the itinerary should be so worthless.

[28] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44, 45. —Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 3.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2. —Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1.

CHAPTER II

REPUBLIC OF TLASCALA—ITS INSTITUTIONS—EARLY HISTORY—DISCUSSIONS IN THE SENATE—DESPERATE BATTLES

1519

BEFORE advancing further with the Spaniards into the territory of Tlascala, it will be well to notice some traits in the character and institutions of the nation, in many respects the most remarkable in Anahuac. The Tlascalans belonged to the same great family with the Aztecs.[1] * They came on the grand plateau about the same time with the kindred races, at the close of the twelfth century, and planted themselves on the western borders of the lake of Tezcuco. Here they remained many years, engaged in the usual pursuits of a bold and partially civilized people.

[1] The Indian chronicler, Camargo, considers his nation a branch of the Chichimec. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) So, also, Torquemada. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 9.) Clavigero, who has carefully investigated the antiquities of Anahuac, calls it one of the seven Nahuatlac tribes. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 153, nota.) The fact is not of great moment, since they were all cognate races, speaking the same tongue, and, probably, migrated from their country in the far North at nearly the same time.

* [The Tlascalans, "belonging to the same great family with the Aztecs," of course had governmental institutions similar to those of the Aztecs. The clan dwelt in a pueblo and was divided into four phratries. For the system of government, see note, pp. 33–36, vol. i. —M.]

From some cause or other, perhaps their turbulent temper, they incurred the enmity of surrounding tribes. A coalition was formed against them; and a bloody battle was fought on the plains of Poyauhtlan, in which the Tlascalans were completely victorious.

Disgusted, however, with their residence among nations with whom they found so little favor, the conquering people resolved to migrate. They separated into three divisions, the largest of which, taking a southern course by the great *volcan* of Mexico, wound round the ancient city of Cholula, and finally settled in the district of country overshadowed by the sierra of Tlascala. The warm and fruitful valleys, locked up in the embraces of this rugged brotherhood of mountains, afforded means of subsistence for an agricultural people, while the bold eminences of the sierra presented secure positions for their towns.

After the lapse of years, the institutions of the nation underwent an important change. The monarchy was divided first into two, afterwards into four separate states, bound together by a sort of federal compact, probably not very nicely defined. Each state, however, had its lord or supreme chief, independent in his own territories, and possessed of co-ordinate authority with the others in all matters concerning the whole republic. The affairs of government, especially all those relating to peace and war, were settled in a senate or council, consisting of the four lords with their inferior nobles.

The lower dignitaries held of the superior, each

in his own district, by a kind of feudal tenure, being bound to supply his table and enable him to maintain his state in peace, as well as to serve him in war.[2] In return, he experienced the aid and protection of his suzerain. The same mutual obligations existed between him and the followers among whom his own territories were distributed.[3] Thus a chain of feudal dependencies was established, which, if not contrived with all the art and legal refinements of analogous institutions in the Old World, displayed their most prominent characteristics in its personal relations, the obligations of military service on the one hand, and protection on the other. This form of government, so different from that of the surrounding nations, subsisted till the arrival of the Spaniards. And it is certainly evidence of considerable civilization that so complex a polity should have so long continued,

[2] The descendants of these petty nobles attached as great value to their pedigrees as any Biscayan or Asturian in Old Spain. Long after the Conquest, they refused, however needy, to dishonor their birth by resorting to mechanical or other plebeian occupations, *oficios viles y bajos*. "Los descendientes de estos son estimados por hombres calificados, que aunque sean pobrísimos no usan oficios mecánicos ni tratos bajos ni viles, ni jamas se permiten cargar ni cabar con coas y azadones, diciendo que son hijos Idalgos en que no han de aplicarse á estas cosas soeces y bajas, sino servir en guerras y fronteras, como Idalgos, y morir como hombres peleando." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[3] "Cualquier Tecuhtli que formaba un Tecalli, que es casa de Mayorazgo, todas aquellas tierras que le caian en suerte de repartimiento, con montes, fuentes, rios, ó lagunas tomase para la casa principal la mayor y mejor suerte ó pagos de tierra, y luego las demas que quedaban se partian por sus soldados amigos y parientes, igualmente, y todos estos están obligados á reconocer la casa mayor y acudir á ella, á alzarla y repararla, y á ser continuos en reconocer á ella de aves, caza, flores, y ramos para el sustento de la casa del Mayorazgo, y el que lo es está obligado á sustentarlos y á regalarlos como amigos de aquella casa y parientes de ella." Ibid., MS.

undisturbed by violence or faction in the confederate states, and should have been found competent to protect the people in their rights, and the country from foreign invasion.

The lowest order of the people, however, do not seem to have enjoyed higher immunities than under the monarchical governments; and their rank was carefully defined by an appropriate dress, and by their exclusion from the insignia of the aristocratic orders.[4]

The nation, agricultural in its habits, reserved its highest honors, like most other rude—unhappily, also, civilized—nations, for military prowess. Public games were instituted, and prizes decreed to those who excelled in such manly and athletic exercises as might train them for the fatigues of war. Triumphs were granted to the victorious general, who entered the city leading his spoils and captives in long procession, while his achievements were commemorated in national songs, and his effigy, whether in wood or stone, was erected in the temples. It was truly in the martial spirit of republican Rome.[5]

An institution not unlike knighthood was introduced, very similar to one existing also among the Aztecs. The aspirant to the honors of this barbaric chivalry watched his arms and fasted fifty or

[4] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[5] "Los grandes recibimientos que hacian á los capitanes que venian y alcanzaban victoria en las guerras, las fiestas y solenidades con que se solenizaban á manera de triunfo, que los metian en andas en su puebla, trayendo consigo á los vencidos; y por eternizar sus hazañas se las cantaban publicamente, y ansí quedaban memoradas y con estatuas que les ponian en los templos." Ibid., MS.

sixty days in the temple, then listened to a grave discourse on the duties of his new profession. Various whimsical ceremonies followed, when his arms were restored to him; he was led in solemn procession through the public streets, and the inauguration was concluded by banquets and public rejoicings. The new knight was distinguished henceforth by certain peculiar privileges, as well as by a badge intimating his rank. It is worthy of remark that this honor was not reserved exclusively for military merit, but was the recompense, also, of public services of other kinds, as wisdom in council, or sagacity and success in trade. For trade was held in as high estimation by the Tlascalans as by the other people of Anahuac.[6]

The temperate climate of the table-land furnished the ready means for distant traffic. The fruitfulness of the soil was indicated by the name of the country,—*Tlascala* signifying the "land of bread." Its wide plains, to the slopes of its rocky hills, waved with yellow harvests of maize, and with the bountiful maguey, a plant which, as we have seen, supplied the materials for some important fabrics. With these, as well as the products of agricultural industry, the merchant found his way down the sides of the Cordilleras, wandered over the sunny regions at their base, and brought back the luxuries which nature had denied to his own.[7]

[6] For the whole ceremony of inauguration,—though, as it seems, having especial reference to the merchant-knights,—see Appendix, No. 9, where the original is given from Camargo.

[7] "Ha bel paese," says the Anonymous Conqueror, speaking of Tlascala at the time of the invasion, "di pianure et motagne, et è

The various arts of civilization kept pace with increasing wealth and public prosperity; at least, these arts were cultivated to the same limited extent, apparently, as among the other people of Anahuac. The Tlascalan tongue, says the national historian, simple as beseemed that of a mountain region, was rough compared with the polished Tezcucan or the popular Aztec dialect, and, therefore, not so well fitted for composition. But the Tlascalans made like proficiency with the kindred nations in the rudiments of science. Their calendar was formed on the same plan. Their religion, their architecture, many of their laws and social usages, were the same, arguing a common origin for all. Their tutelary deity was the same ferocious war-god as that of the Aztecs, though with a different name; their temples, in like manner, were drenched with the blood of human victims, and their boards groaned with the same cannibal repasts.[8]

Though not ambitious of foreign conquest, the prosperity of the Tlascalans, in time, excited the jealousy of their neighbors, and especially of the opulent state of Cholula. Frequent hostilities rose between them, in which the advantage was almost always on the side of the former. A still more formidable foe appeared in later days in the Aztecs, who could ill brook the independence of Tlas-

provincia popolosa et vi si raccoglie molto pane." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 308.

[8] A full account of the manners, customs, and domestic policy of Tlascala is given by the national historian, throwing much light on the other states of Anahuac, whose social institutions seem to have been all cast in the same mould.

cala when the surrounding nations had acknowledged, one after another, their influence or their empire. Under the ambitious Axayacatl, they demanded of the Tlascalans the same tribute and obedience rendered by other people of the country. If it were refused, the Aztecs would raze their cities to their foundations, and deliver the land to their enemies.

To this imperious summons, the little republic proudly replied, "Neither they nor their ancestors had ever paid tribute or homage to a foreign power, and never would pay it. If their country was invaded, they knew how to defend it, and would pour out their blood as freely in defence of their freedom now as their fathers did of yore, when they routed the Aztecs on the plains of Poyauhtlan!" [9]

This resolute answer brought on them the forces of the monarchy. A pitched battle followed, and the sturdy republicans were victorious. From this period, hostilities between the two nations continued with more or less activity, but with unsparing ferocity. Every captive was mercilessly sacrificed. The children were trained from the cradle to deadly hatred against the Mexicans; and, even in the brief intervals of war, none of those intermarriages took place between the people of the respective countries, which knit together in social bonds most of the other kindred races of Anahuac.

In this struggle the Tlascalans received an important support in the accession of the Othomis,

[9] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 70.

or Otomies,—as usually spelt by Castilian writers,—a wild and warlike race originally spread over the table-land north of the Mexican Valley. A portion of them obtained a settlement in the republic, and were speedily incorporated in its armies. Their courage and fidelity to the nation of their adoption showed them worthy of trust, and the frontier places were consigned to their keeping. The mountain barriers by which Tlascala is encompassed afforded many strong natural positions for defence against invasion. The country was open towards the east, where a valley, of some six miles in breadth, invited the approach of an enemy. But here it was that the jealous Tlascalans erected the formidable rampart which had excited the admiration of the Spaniards, and which they manned with a garrison of Otomies.

Efforts for their subjugation were renewed on a greater scale after the accession of Montezuma. His victorious arms had spread down the declivities of the Andes to the distant provinces of Vera Paz and Nicaragua,[10] and his haughty spirit was chafed by the opposition of a petty state whose territorial extent did not exceed ten leagues in breadth by fifteen in length.[11] He sent an army against them under the command of a favorite son. His troops were beaten, and his son was

[10] Camargo (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) notices the extent of Montezuma's conquests,—a debatable ground for the historian.

[11] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 16.—Solís says, "The Tlascalan territory was fifty leagues in circumference, ten long, from east to west, and four broad, from north to south." (Conquista de Méjico, lib. 3, cap. 3.) It must have made a curious figure in geometry!

slain. The enraged and mortified monarch was roused to still greater preparations. He enlisted the forces of the cities bordering on his enemy, together with those of the empire, and with this formidable army swept over the devoted valleys of Tlascala. But the bold mountaineers withdrew into the recesses of their hills, and, coolly awaiting their opportunity, rushed like a torrent on the invaders, and drove them back, with dreadful slaughter, from their territories.

Still, notwithstanding the advantages gained over the enemy in the field, the Tlascalans were sorely pressed by their long hostilities with a foe so far superior to themselves in numbers and resources. The Aztec armies lay between them and the coast, cutting off all communication with that prolific region, and thus limited their supplies to the products of their own soil and manufacture. For more than half a century they had neither cotton, nor cacao, nor salt. Indeed, their taste had been so far affected by long abstinence from these articles that it required the lapse of several generations after the Conquest to reconcile them to the use of salt at their meals.[12] During the short intervals of war, it is said, the Aztec nobles, in the true spirit of chivalry, sent supplies of these commodities as presents, with many courteous expressions of respect, to the Tlascalan chiefs. This intercourse, we are assured by the Indian chronicler, was unsuspected by the people. Nor did it lead to any further correspondence, he adds, between the parties, prejudicial to the liberties of the republic,

[12] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

" which maintained its customs and good government inviolate, and the worship of its gods." [13]

Such was the condition of Tlascala at the coming of the Spaniards; holding, it might seem, a precarious existence under the shadow of the formidable power which seemed suspended like an avalanche over her head, but still strong in her own resources, stronger in the indomitable temper of her people; with a reputation established throughout the land for good faith and moderation in peace, for valor in war, while her uncompromising spirit of independence secured the respect even of her enemies. With such qualities of character, and with an animosity sharpened by long, deadly hostility with Mexico, her alliance was obviously of the last importance to the Spaniards, in their present enterprise. It was not easy to secure it.[14]

The Tlascalans had been made acquainted with the advance and victorious career of the Christians, the intelligence of which had spread far and wide over the plateau. But they do not seem to have anticipated the approach of the strangers to their own borders. They were now much embarrassed by the embassy demanding a passage through their territories. The great council was

[13] " Los Señores Mejicanos y Tezcucanos en tiempo que ponian treguas por algunas temporadas embiaban á los Señores de Tlaxcalla grandes presentes y dádivas de oro, ropa, y cacao, y sal, y de todas las cosas de que carecian, sin que la gente plebeya lo entendiese, y se saludaban secretamente, guardándose el decoro que se debian; mas con todos estos trabajos la órden de su república jamas se dejaba de gobernar con la rectitud de sus costumbres guardando inviolablemente el culto de sus Dioses." Ibid., MS.

[14] The Tlascalan chronicler discerns in this deep-rooted hatred of Mexico the hand of Providence, who wrought out of it an important means for subverting the Aztec empire. Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

convened, and a considerable difference of opinion prevailed in its members. Some, adopting the popular superstition, supposed the Spaniards might be the white and bearded men foretold by the oracles.[15] At all events, they were the enemies of Mexico, and as such might co-operate with them in their struggle with the empire. Others argued that the strangers could have nothing in common with them. Their march throughout the land might be tracked by the broken images of the Indian gods and desecrated temples. How did the Tlascalans even know that they were foes to Montezuma? They had received his embassies, accepted his presents, and were now in the company of his vassals on the way to his capital.

These last were the reflections of an aged chief, one of the four who presided over the republic. His name was Xicotencatl. He was nearly blind, having lived, as is said, far beyond the limits of a century.[16] His son, an impetuous young man of the same name with himself, commanded a powerful army of Tlascalan and Otomi warriors, near the eastern frontier. It would be best, the old man said, to fall with this force at once on the Spaniards. If victorious, the latter would then be in their power. If defeated, the senate could disown

[15] "Si bien os acordais, como tenemos de nuestra antigüedad como han de venir gentes á la parte donde sale el sol, y que han de emparentar con nosotros, y que hemos de ser todos unos; y que han de ser blancos y barbudos." Ibid., MS.

[16] To the ripe age of one hundred and forty! if we may credit Camargo. Solís, who confounds this veteran with his son, has put a flourishing harangue in the mouth of the latter, which would be a rare gem of Indian eloquence,—were it not Castilian. Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 16.

the act as that of the general, not of the republic.[17] The cunning counsel of the chief found favor with his hearers, though assuredly not in the spirit of chivalry, nor of the good faith for which his countrymen were celebrated. But with an Indian, force and stratagem, courage and deceit, were equally admissible in war, as they were among the barbarians of ancient Rome.[18] The Cempoallan envoys were to be detained under pretence of assisting at a religious sacrifice.

Meanwhile, Cortés and his gallant band, as stated in the preceding chapter, had arrived before the rocky rampart on the eastern confines of Tlascala. From some cause or other, it was not manned by its Otomi garrison, and the Spaniards passed in, as we have seen, without resistance. Cortés rode at the head of his body of horse, and, ordering the infantry to come on at a quick pace, went forward to reconnoitre. After advancing three or four leagues, he descried a small party of Indians, armed with sword and buckler, in the fashion of the country. They fled at his approach. He made signs for them to halt, but, seeing that they only fled the faster, he and his companions put spurs to their horses, and soon came up with them. The Indians, finding escape impossible, faced round, and instead of showing the accustomed terror of the natives at the strange and

[17] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 3.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 27.—There is sufficient contradiction, as well as obscurity, in the proceedings reported of the council, which it is not easy to reconcile altogether with subsequent events.

[18] "—— Dolus an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?"

appalling aspect of a mounted trooper, they commenced a furious assault on the cavaliers. The latter, however, were too strong for them, and would have cut their enemy to pieces without much difficulty, when a body of several thousand Indians appeared in sight, coming briskly on to the support of their countrymen.

Cortés, seeing them, despatched one of his party in all haste, to accelerate the march of his infantry. The Indians, after discharging their missiles, fell furiously on the little band of Spaniards. They strove to tear the lances from their grasp, and to drag the riders from the horses. They brought one cavalier to the ground, who afterwards died of his wounds, and they killed two of the horses, cutting through their necks with their stout broadswords—if we may believe the chronicler—at a blow![19] In the narrative of these campaigns there is sometimes but one step—and that a short one—from history to romance. The loss of the horses, so important and so few in number, was seriously felt by Cortés, who could have better spared the life of the best rider in the troop.

The struggle was a hard one. But the odds were as overwhelming as any recorded by the

[19] "I les matáron dos caballos, de dos cuchilladas, i segun algunos, que lo viéron, cortáron á cercen de un golpe cada pescueço, con riendas, i todas." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 45.*

* [The Mexican sword was a horrible affair. On two sides of a stick three feet and a half long and four inches wide were fastened a number of obsidian razors about three inches long and one or two inches wide. These razors were the thickness of a sword blade. They were at first wonderfully sharp,—so sharp that once a horse was beheaded at one stroke,—but soon lost their edge. The sword was tied to the arm by a string that it should not be lost in battle.—M.]

Spaniards in their own romances, where a handful of knights is arrayed against legions of enemies. The lances of the Christians did terrible execution here also; but they had need of the magic lance of Astolpho, that overturned myriads with a touch, to carry them safe through so unequal a contest. It was with no little satisfaction, therefore, that they beheld their comrades rapidly advancing to their support.

No sooner had the main body reached the field of battle, than, hastily forming, they poured such a volley from their muskets and cross-bows as staggered the enemy. Astounded, rather than intimidated, by the terrible report of the fire-arms, now heard for the first time in these regions, the Indians made no further effort to continue the fight, but drew off in good order, leaving the road open to the Spaniards. The latter, too well satisfied to be rid of the annoyance to care to follow the retreating foe, again held on their way.

Their route took them through a country sprinkled over with Indian cottages, amidst flourishing fields of maize and maguey, indicating an industrious and thriving peasantry. They were met here by two Tlascalan envoys, accompanied by two of the Cempoallans. The former, presenting themselves before the general, disavowed the assault on his troops, as an unauthorized act, and assured him of a friendly reception at their capital. Cortés received the communication in a courteous manner, affecting to place more confidence in its good faith than he probably felt.

It was now growing late, and the Spaniards

quickened their march, anxious to reach a favorable ground for encampment before nightfall. They found such a spot on the borders of a stream that rolled sluggishly across the plain. A few deserted cottages stood along the banks, and the fatigued and famished soldiers ransacked them in quest of food. All they could find was some tame animals resembling dogs. These they killed and dressed without ceremony, and, garnishing their unsavory repast with the fruit of the *tuna,* the Indian fig, which grew wild in the neighborhood, they contrived to satisfy the cravings of appetite. A careful watch was maintained by Cortés, and companies of a hundred men each relieved each other in mounting guard through the night. But no attack was made. Hostilities by night were contrary to the system of Indian tactics.[20]

By break of day on the following morning, it being the second of September, the troops were under arms. Besides the Spaniards, the whole number of Indian auxiliaries might now amount to three thousand; for Cortés had gathered recruits from the friendly places on his route,—three hundred from the last. After hearing mass, they resumed their march. They moved in close array; the general had previously admonished the men not to lag behind, or wander from the ranks a moment, as stragglers would be sure to be cut off by their stealthy and vigilant enemy. The horsemen

[20] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 50.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 45.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3, 41.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 10.

rode three abreast, the better to give one another support; and Cortés instructed them in the heat of fight to keep together, and never to charge singly. He taught them how to carry their lances that they might not be wrested from their hands by the Indians, who constantly attempted it. For the same reason, they should avoid giving thrusts, but aim their weapons steadily at the faces of their foes.[21]

They had not proceeded far, when they were met by the two remaining Cempoallan envoys, who with looks of terror informed the general that they had been treacherously seized and confined, in order to be sacrificed at an approaching festival of the Tlascalans, but in the night had succeeded in making their escape. They gave the unwelcome tidings, also, that a large force of the natives was already assembled to oppose the progress of the Spaniards.

Soon after, they came in sight of a body of Indians, about a thousand, apparently, all armed, and brandishing their weapons, as the Christians approached, in token of defiance. Cortés, when he had come within hearing, ordered the interpreters to proclaim that he had no hostile intentions, but wished only to be allowed a passage through their country, which he had entered as a friend. This declaration he commanded the royal notary, Godoy, to record on the spot, that, if blood were shed, it might not be charged on the Spaniards. This pacific proclamation was met, as usual on such

[21] "Que quando rompiessemos por los esquadrones, que lleuassen las lanças por las caras, y no parassen á dar lançadas, porque no les echassen mano dellas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.

occasions, by a shower of darts, stones, and arrows, which fell like rain on the Spaniards, rattling on their stout harness, and in some instances penetrating to the skin. Galled by the smart of their wounds, they called on the general to lead them on, till he sounded the well-known battle-cry, "St. Jago, and at them!" [22]

The Indians maintained their ground for a while with spirit, when they retreated with precipitation, but not in disorder.[23] The Spaniards, whose blood was heated by the encounter, followed up their advantage with more zeal than prudence, suffering the wily enemy to draw them into a narrow glen or defile intersected by a little stream of water, where the broken ground was impracticable for artillery, as well as for the movements of cavalry. Pressing forward with eagerness, to extricate themselves from their perilous position, to their great dismay, on turning an abrupt angle of the pass, they came in presence of a numerous army, choking up the gorge of the valley, and stretching far over the plains beyond. To the astonished eyes of Cortés, they appeared a hundred thousand men, while no account estimates them at less than thirty thousand.[24]

[22] "Entonces dixo Cortés, 'Santiago, y á ellos.'" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.

[23] "Una gentil contienda," says Gomara of this skirmish. Crónica, cap. 46.

[24] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 51. According to Gomara (Crónica, cap. 46), the enemy mustered 80,000. So, also, Ixtlilxochitl. (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.) Bernal Diaz says, more than 40,000. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.) But Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 5) and Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 20) reduce them to 30,000. One might as easily reckon the leaves in a

They presented a confused assemblage of helmets, weapons, and many-colored plumes, glancing bright in the morning sun, and mingling with banners, above which proudly floated one that bore as a device the heron on a rock. It was the well-known ensign of the house of Titcala, and, as well as the white and yellow stripes on the bodies and the like colors on the feather-mail of the Indians, showed that they were the warriors of Xicotencatl.[25]

As the Spaniards came in sight, the Tlascalans set up a hideous war-cry, or rather whistle, piercing the ear with its shrillness, and which, with the beat of their melancholy drums, that could be heard for half a league or more,[26] might well have filled the stoutest heart with dismay. This formidable host came rolling on towards the Christians, as if to overwhelm them by their very numbers. But the courageous band of warriors, closely serried together and sheltered under their

forest, as the numbers of a confused throng of barbarians. As this was only one of several armies kept on foot by the Tlascalans, the smallest amount is, probably, too large. The whole population of the state, according to Clavigero, who would not be likely to underrate it, did not exceed half a million at the time of the invasion. Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 156.

[25] "La divisa y armas de la casa y cabecera de Titcala es una garga blanca sobre un peñasco." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) "El capitan general," says Bernal Diaz, "que se dezia Xicotenga, y con sus diuisas de blanco y colorado, porque aquella diuisa y librea era de aquel Xicotenga." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.

[26] "Llaman Teponaztle ques de un trozo de madero concavado y de una pieza rollizo y, como decimos, hueco por de dentro, que suena algunas veces mas de media legua y con el atambor hace estraña y suave consonancia." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) Clavigero, who gives a drawing of this same drum, says it is still used by the Indians, and may be heard two or three miles. Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 179.

strong panoplies, received the shock unshaken, while the broken masses of the enemy, chafing and heaving tumultuously around them, seemed to recede only to return with new and accumulated force.

Cortés, as usual, in the front of danger, in vain endeavored, at the head of the horse, to open a passage for the infantry. Still his men, both cavalry and foot, kept their array unbroken, offering no assailable point to their foe. A body of the Tlascalans, however, acting in concert, assaulted a soldier named Moran, one of the best riders in the troop. They succeeded in dragging him from his horse, which they despatched with a thousand blows. The Spaniards, on foot, made a desperate effort to rescue their comrade from the hands of the enemy,—and from the horrible doom of the captive. A fierce struggle now began over the body of the prostrate horse. Ten of the Spaniards were wounded, when they succeeded in retrieving the unfortunate cavalier from his assailants, but in so disastrous a plight that he died on the following day. The horse was borne off in triumph by the Indians, and his mangled remains were sent, a strange trophy, to the different towns of Tlascala. The circumstance troubled the Spanish commander, as it divested the animal of the supernatural terrors with which the superstition of the natives had usually surrounded it. To prevent such a consequence, he had caused the two horses, killed on the preceding day, to be secretly buried on the spot.

The enemy now began to give ground gradu-

ally, borne down by the riders, and trampled under the hoofs of their horses. Through the whole of this sharp encounter the Indian allies were of great service to the Spaniards. They rushed into the water, and grappled their enemies, with the desperation of men who felt that "their only safety was in the despair of safety." [27] "I see nothing but death for us," exclaimed a Cempoallan chief to Marina; "we shall never get through the pass alive." "The God of the Christians is with us," answered the intrepid woman; "and He will carry us safely through." [28]

Amidst the din of battle, the voice of Cortés was heard, cheering on his soldiers. "If we fail now," he cried, "the Cross of Christ can never be planted in the land. Forward, comrades! When was it ever known that a Castilian turned his back on a foe?" [29] Animated by the words and heroic bearing of their general, the soldiers, with desperate efforts, at length succeeded in forcing a passage through the dark columns of the enemy, and emerged from the defile on the open plains beyond.

Here they quickly recovered their confidence with their superiority. The horse soon opened a space for the manœuvres of the artillery. The close files of their antagonists presented a sure mark; and the thunders of the ordnance vomiting

[27] "Una illis fuit spes salutis, desperâsse de salute." (P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 1, cap. 1.) It is said with the classic energy of Tacitus.

[28] "Respondióle Marina, que no tuviese miedo, porque el Dios de los Christianos, que es muy poderoso, i los queria mucho, los sacaria de peligro." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 5.

[29] Ibid., ubi supra.

forth torrents of fire and sulphurous smoke, the wide desolation caused in their ranks, and the strangely mangled carcasses of the slain, filled the barbarians with consternation and horror. They had no weapons to cope with these terrible engines, and their clumsy missiles, discharged from uncertain hands, seemed to fall ineffectual on the charmed heads of the Christians. What added to their embarrassment was the desire to carry off the dead and wounded from the field, a general practice among the people of Anahuac, but one which necessarily exposed them, while thus employed, to still greater loss.

Eight of their principal chiefs had now fallen, and Xicotencatl, finding himself wholly unable to make head against the Spaniards in the open field, ordered a retreat. Far from the confusion of a panic-struck mob, so common among barbarians, the Tlascalan force moved off the ground with all the order of a well-disciplined army. Cortés, as on the preceding day, was too well satisfied with his present advantage to desire to follow it up. It was within an hour of sunset, and he was anxious before nightfall to secure a good position, where he might refresh his wounded troops and bivouac for the night.[30]

Gathering up his wounded, he held on his way, without loss of time, and before dusk reached a rocky eminence, called *Tzompachtepetl,* or "the

[30] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3, 45.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 51.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 40.

hill of Tzompach." It was crowned by a sort of tower or temple, the remains of which are still visible.[31] His first care was given to the wounded, both men and horses. Fortunately, an abundance of provisions was found in some neighboring cottages; and the soldiers, at least all who were not disabled by their injuries, celebrated the victory of the day with feasting and rejoicing.

As to the number of killed or wounded on either side, it is matter of loosest conjecture. The Indians must have suffered severely, but the practice of carrying off the dead from the field made it impossible to know to what extent. The injury sustained by the Spaniards appears to have been principally in the number of their wounded. The great object of the natives of Anahuac in their battles was to make prisoners, who might grace their triumphs and supply victims for sacrifice. To this brutal superstition the Christians were indebted, in no slight degree, for their personal preservation. To take the reports of the Conquerors, their own losses in action were always inconsiderable. But whoever has had occasion to consult the ancient chroniclers of Spain in relation to its wars with the infidel, whether Arab or American, will place little confidence in numbers.[32]

[31] Viaje de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. ix.

[32] According to Cortés, not a Spaniard fell—though many were wounded—in this action so fatal to the infidel! Diaz allows one. In the famous battle of Navas de Tolosa, between the Spaniards and Arabs, in 1212, equally matched in military science at that time, there were left 200,000 of the latter on the field; and, to balance this bloody roll, only five-and-twenty Christians! See the estimate in Alfonso IX.'s veracious letter, ap. Mariana (Hist. de España, lib. 2, cap. 24). The official returns of the old Castilian crusaders, whether in the Old

The events of the day had suggested many topics for painful reflection to Cortés. He had nowhere met with so determined a resistance within the borders of Anahuac; nowhere had he encountered native troops so formidable for their weapons, their discipline, and their valor. Far from manifesting the superstitious terrors felt by the other Indians at the strange arms and aspect of the Spaniards, the Tlascalans had boldly grappled with their enemy, and only yielded to the inevitable superiority of his military science. How important would the alliance of such a nation be in a struggle with those of their own race,—for example, with the Aztecs! But how was he to secure this alliance? Hitherto, all overtures had been rejected with disdain; and it seemed probable that every step of his progress in this populous land was to be fiercely contested. His army, especially the Indians, celebrated the events of the day with feasting and dancing, songs of merriment, and shouts of triumph. Cortés encouraged it, well knowing how important it was to keep up the spirits of his soldiers. But the sounds of revelry at length died away; and, in the still watches of the night, many an anxious thought must have crowded on the mind of the general, while his little army lay buried in slumber in its encampment around the Indian hill.

World or the New, are scarcely more trustworthy than a French *imperial* bulletin in our day.

CHAPTER III

DECISIVE VICTORY—INDIAN COUNCIL—NIGHT-ATTACK—NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ENEMY—TLASCALAN HERO

1519

THE Spaniards were allowed to repose undisturbed the following day, and to recruit their strength after the fatigue and hard fighting of the preceding. They found sufficient employment, however, in repairing and cleaning their weapons, replenishing their diminished stock of arrows, and getting everything in order for further hostilities, should the severe lesson they had inflicted on the enemy prove insufficient to discourage him. On the second day, as Cortés received no overtures from the Tlascalans, he determined to send an embassy to their camp, proposing a cessation of hostilities, and expressing his intention to visit their capital as a friend. He selected two of the principal chiefs taken in the late engagement, as the bearers of the message.

Meanwhile, averse to leaving his men longer in a dangerous state of inaction, which the enemy might interpret as the result of timidity or exhaustion, he put himself at the head of the cavalry and such light troops as were most fit for service, and

made a foray into the neighboring country. It was a mountainous region, formed by a ramification of the great sierra of Tlascala, with verdant slopes and valleys teeming with maize and plantations of maguey, while the eminences were crowned with populous towns and villages. In one of these, he tells us, he found three thousand dwellings.[1] In some places he met with a resolute resistance, and on these occasions took ample vengeance by laying the country waste with fire and sword. After a successful inroad he returned laden with forage and provisions and driving before him several hundred Indian captives. He treated them kindly, however, when arrived in camp, endeavoring to make them understand that these acts of violence were not dictated by his own wishes, but by the unfriendly policy of their countrymen. In this way he hoped to impress the nation with the conviction of his power on the one hand, and of his amicable intentions, if met by them in the like spirit, on the other.

On reaching his quarters, he found the two envoys returned from the Tlascalan camp. They had fallen in with Xicotencatl at about two leagues' distance, where he lay encamped with a powerful force. The cacique gave them audience at the head of his troops. He told them to return

[1] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Oviedo, who made free use of the manuscripts of Cortés, writes thirty-nine houses. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.) This may perhaps be explained by the sign for a thousand, in Spanish notation, bearing great resemblance to the figure 9. Martyr, who had access, also, to the Conqueror's manuscript, confirms the larger and, *a priori*, less probable number.

with the answer, "that the Spaniards might pass on as soon as they chose to Tlascala; and, when they reached it, their flesh would be hewn from their bodies, for sacrifice to the gods! If they preferred to remain in their own quarters, he would pay them a visit there the next day."[2] The ambassadors added that the chief had an immense force with him, consisting of five battalions of ten thousand men each. They were the flower of the Tlascalan and Otomi warriors, assembled under the banners of their respective leaders, by command of the senate, who were resolved to try the fortunes of the state in a pitched battle and strike one decisive blow for the extermination of the invaders.[3]

This bold defiance fell heavily on the ears of the Spaniards, not prepared for so pertinacious a spirit in their enemy. They had had ample proof of his courage and formidable prowess. They were now, in their crippled condition, to encounter him with a still more terrible array of numbers. The war, too, from the horrible fate with which it menaced the vanquished, wore a peculiarly gloomy aspect, that pressed heavily on their spirits. "We feared death," says the lion-hearted Diaz, with his usual simplicity, "for we were men." There was

[2] "Que fuessemos á su pueblo adonde está su padre, q allá harian las pazes cõ hartarse de nuestras carnes, y honrar sus dioses con nuestros coraçones, y sangre, é que para otro dia de mañana veriamos su respuesta." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.

[3] More than one writer repeats a story of the Tlascalan general's sending a good supply of provisions, at this time, to the famished army of the Spaniards; to put them in stomach, it may be, for the fight. (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.) This ultra-chivalrous display from the barbarian is not very probable, and Cortés' own account of his successful foray may much better explain the abundance which reigned in his camp.

scarcely one in the army that did not confess himself that night to the reverend Father Olmedo, who was occupied nearly the whole of it with administering absolution, and with the other solemn offices of the Church. Armed with the blessed sacraments, the Catholic soldier lay tranquilly down to rest, prepared for any fate that might betide him under the banner of the Cross.[4]

As a battle was now inevitable, Cortés resolved to march out and meet the enemy in the field. This would have a show of confidence that might serve the double purpose of intimidating the Tlascalans and inspiriting his own men, whose enthusiasm might lose somewhat of its heat if compelled to await the assault of their antagonists, inactive in their own intrenchments. The sun rose bright on the following morning, the fifth of September, 1519, an eventful day in the history of the Spanish Conquest. The general reviewed his army, and gave them, preparatory to marching, a few words of encouragement and advice. The infantry he instructed to rely on the point rather than the edge of their swords, and to endeavor to thrust their opponents through the body. The horsemen were to charge at half speed, with their lances aimed at the eyes of the Indians. The artillery, the arquebusiers, and crossbowmen were to support one another, some loading while others discharged their pieces, that there should be an

[4] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46, 47.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.

unintermitted firing kept up through the action. Above all, they were to maintain their ranks close and unbroken, as on this depended their preservation.

They had not advanced a quarter of a league, when they came in sight of the Tlascalan army. Its dense array stretched far and wide over a vast plain or meadow-ground about six miles square. Its appearance justified the report which had been given of its numbers.[5] Nothing could be more picturesque than the aspect of these Indian battalions, with the naked bodies of the common soldiers gaudily painted, the fantastic helmets of the chiefs glittering with gold and precious stones, and the glowing panoplies of feather-work which decorated their persons.[6] Innumerable spears and darts, tipped with points of transparent *itztli* or fiery copper, sparkled bright in the morning sun, like the phosphoric gleams playing on the surface of a troubled sea, while the rear of the mighty host was dark with the shadows of banners, on which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of the great

[5] Through the magnifying lens of Cortés, there appeared to be 150,000 men (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 52); a number usually preferred by succeeding writers.

[6] "Not half so gorgeous, for their May-day mirth
All wreathed and ribanded, our youths and maids,
As these stern *Tlascalans* in war attire!
The golden glitterance, and the feather-mail
More gay than glittering gold; and round the helm
A coronal of high upstanding plumes,
Green as the spring grass in a sunny shower;
Or scarlet bright, as in the wintry wood
The clustered holly; or of purple tint;
Whereto shall that be likened? to what gem
Indiademed, what flower, what insect's wing?
With war-songs and wild music they came on;
We, the while kneeling, raised with one accord
The hymn of supplication."

SOUTHEY's Madoc, Part 1, canto 7.

Tlascalan and Otomi chieftains.[7] Among these, the white heron on the rock, the cognizance of the house of Xicotencatl, was conspicuous, and, still more, the golden eagle with outspread wings, in the fashion of a Roman *signum,* richly ornamented with emeralds and silver-work, the great standard of the republic of Tlascala.[8] *

The common file wore no covering except a girdle round the loins. Their bodies were painted with the appropriate colors of the chieftain whose banner they followed. The feather-mail of the higher class of warriors exhibited, also, a similar selection of colors for the like object, in the same manner as the color of the tartan indicates the peculiar clan of the Highlander.[9]

[7] The standards of the Mexicans were carried in the centre, those of the Tlascalans in the rear of the army. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, vol. ii. p. 145.) According to the Anonymous Conqueror, the banner-staff was attached to the back of the ensign, so that it was impossible to be torn away. "Ha ogni copagnia il suo Alfiere con la sua insegna inhastata, et in tal modo ligata sopra le spalle, che non gli da alcun disturbo di poter combattere ne far ció che vuole, et la porta cosi ligata bene al corpo, che se no fanno del suo corpo pezzi, non se gli puo sligare, ne torgliela mai." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[8] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 6.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 45. —The last two authors speak of the device of "a white bird like an ostrich," as that of the republic. They have evidently confounded it with that of the Indian general. Camargo, who has given the heraldic emblems of the four great families of Tlascala, notices the white heron as that of Xicotencatl.

[9] The accounts of the Tlascalan chronicler are confirmed by the Anonymous Conqueror and by Bernal Diaz, both eyewitnesses;

* [*I.e.,* the standard of the tribe. The tribe was divided into phratries. Each phratry had its peculiar cognizance, as had also each of the clans into which the phratry was divided. It was the color of the clan, and not of its war chief, by which the warriors were distinguished.—M.]

The caciques and principal warriors were clothed in quilted cotton tunics, two inches thick, which, fitting close to the body, protected also the thighs and the shoulders. Over these the wealthier Indians wore cuirasses of thin gold plate, or silver. Their legs were defended by leathern boots or sandals, trimmed with gold. But the most brilliant part of their costume was a rich mantle of the *plumaje* or feather-work, embroidered with curious art, and furnishing some resemblance to the gorgeous surcoat worn by the European knight over his armor in the Middle Ages. This graceful and picturesque dress was surmounted by a fantastic head-piece made of wood or leather, representing the head of some wild animal, and frequently displaying a formidable array of teeth. With this covering the warrior's head was enveloped, producing a most grotesque and hideous effect.[10] From the crown floated a splendid panache of the richly variegated plumage of the tropics, indicating, by its form and colors, the rank and family of the wearer. To complete their defensive armor, they carried shields or targets, made sometimes of wood covered with leather, but more usually of a

though the latter frankly declares that had he not seen them with his own eyes he should never have credited the existence of orders and badges among the barbarians, like those found among the civilized nations of Europe. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64, et alibi.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[10] "Portano in testa," says the Anonymous Conqueror, "per difesa una cosa come teste di serpeti, ò di tigri, ò di leoni, ò di lupi, che ha le mascelle, et è la testa dell' huomo messa nella testa di qsto animale come se lo volesse diuorare: sono di legno, et sopra vi é la pena, et di piastra d'oro et di pietre preciose copte, che è cosa marauigliosa da vedere." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

light frame of reeds quilted with cotton, which were preferred, as tougher and less liable to fracture than the former. They had other bucklers, in which the cotton was covered with an elastic substance, enabling them to be shut up in a more compact form, like a fan or umbrella. These shields were decorated with showy ornaments, according to the taste or wealth of the wearer, and fringed with a beautiful pendant of feather-work.

Their weapons were slings, bows and arrows, javelins, and darts. They were accomplished archers, and would discharge two or even three arrows at a time. But they most excelled in throwing the javelin. One species of this, with a thong attached to it, which remained in the slinger's hand, that he might recall the weapon, was especially dreaded by the Spaniards. These various weapons were pointed with bone, or the mineral *itztli* (obsidian), the hard vitreous substance already noticed as capable of taking an edge like a razor, though easily blunted. Their spears and arrows were also frequently headed with copper. Instead of a sword, they bore a two-handed staff, about three feet and a half long, in which, at regular distances, were inserted, transversely, sharp blades of *itztli*,—a formidable weapon, which, an eyewitness assures us, he had seen fell a horse at a blow.[11]

Such was the costume of the Tlascalan warrior, and, indeed, of that great family of nations gener-

[11] "I saw one day an Indian make a thrust at the horse of a cavalier with whom he was fighting, which pierced its breast, and penetrated so deep that it immediately fell dead; and the same day I saw another Indian cut the neck of a horse, which fell dead at his feet." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

ally who occupied the plateau of Anahuac. Some parts of it, as the targets and the cotton mail, or *escaupil,* as it was called in Castilian, were so excellent that they were subsequently adopted by the Spaniards, as equally effectual in the way of protection, and superior on the score of lightness and convenience to their own. They were of sufficient strength to turn an arrow or the stroke of a javelin, although impotent as a defence against firearms. But what armor is not? Yet it is probably no exaggeration to say that, in convenience, gracefulness, and strength, the arms of the Indian warrior were not very inferior to those of the polished nations of antiquity.[12]

As soon as the Castilians came in sight, the Tlascalans set up their yell of defiance, rising high above the wild barbaric minstrelsy of shell, atabal, and trumpet, with which they proclaimed their triumphant anticipations of victory over the paltry forces of the invaders. When the latter had come within bowshot, the Indians hurled a tempest of missiles, that darkened the sun for a moment as with a passing cloud, strewing the earth around with heaps of stones and arrows.[13] Slowly and steadily the little band of Spaniards held on its way amidst this arrowy shower, until it had reached

[12] Particular notices of the military dress and appointments of the American tribes on the plateau may be found in Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.,—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 101, et seq., —Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 26,—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305, et auct. al.

[13] "Que granizo de piedra de los honderos! Pues flechas todo el suelo hecho parva de varas todas de á dos gajos, que passan qualquiera arma, y las entrañas adonde no ay defensa." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65.

what appeared the proper distance for delivering its fire with full effect. Cortés then halted, and, hastily forming his troops, opened a general well-directed fire along the whole line. Every shot bore its errand of death; and the ranks of the Indians were mowed down faster than their comrades in the rear could carry off their bodies, according to custom, from the field. The balls in their passage through the crowded files, bearing splinters of the broken harness and mangled limbs of the warriors, scattered havoc and desolation in their path. The mob of barbarians stood petrified with dismay, till at length, galled to desperation by their intolerable suffering, they poured forth simultaneously their hideous war-shriek and rushed impetuously on the Christians.

On they came like an avalanche, or mountain torrent, shaking the solid earth and sweeping away every obstacle in its path. The little army of Spaniards opposed a bold front to the overwhelming mass. But no strength could withstand it. They faltered, gave way, were borne along before it, and their ranks were broken and thrown into disorder. It was in vain the general called on them to close again and rally. His voice was drowned by the din of fight and the fierce cries of the assailants. For a moment, it seemed that all was lost. The tide of battle had turned against them, and the fate of the Christians was sealed.

But every man had that within his bosom which spoke louder than the voice of the general. Despair gave unnatural energy to his arm. The naked body of the Indian afforded no resistance

to the sharp Toledo steel; and with their good swords the Spanish infantry at length succeeded in staying the human torrent. The heavy guns from a distance thundered on the flank of the assailants, which, shaken by the iron tempest, was thrown into disorder. Their very numbers increased the confusion, as they were precipitated on the masses in front. The horse at the same moment, charging gallantly under Cortés, followed up the advantage, and at length compelled the tumultuous throng to fall back with greater precipitation and disorder than that with which they had advanced.

More than once in the course of the action a similar assault was attempted by the Tlascalans, but each time with less spirit and greater loss. They were too deficient in military science to profit by their vast superiority in numbers. They were distributed into companies, it is true, each serving under its own chieftain and banner. But they were not arranged by rank and file, and moved in a confused mass, promiscuously heaped together. They knew not how to concentrate numbers on a given point, or even how to sustain an assault, by employing successive detachments to support and relieve one another. A very small part only of their array could be brought into contact with an enemy inferior to them in amount of forces. The remainder of the army, inactive and worse than useless, in the rear, served only to press tumultuously on the advance and embarrass its movements by mere weight of numbers, while on the least alarm they were seized with a panic and threw the whole body into inextricable confusion. It was,

in short, the combat of the ancient Greeks and Persians over again.

Still, the great numerical superiority of the Indians might have enabled them, at a severe cost of their own lives, indeed, to wear out, in time, the constancy of the Spaniards, disabled by wounds and incessant fatigue. But, fortunately for the latter, dissensions arose among their enemies. A Tlascalan chieftain, commanding one of the great divisions, had taken umbrage at the haughty demeanor of Xicotencatl, who had charged him with misconduct or cowardice in the late action. The injured cacique challenged his rival to single combat. This did not take place. But, burning with resentment, he chose the present occasion to indulge it, by drawing off his forces, amounting to ten thousand men, from the field. He also persuaded another of the commanders to follow his example.

Thus reduced to about half his original strength, and that greatly crippled by the losses of the day, Xicotencatl could no longer maintain his ground against the Spaniards. After disputing the field with admirable courage for four hours, he retreated and resigned it to the enemy. The Spaniards were too much jaded, and too many were disabled by wounds, to allow them to pursue; and Cortés, satisfied with the decisive victory he had gained, returned in triumph to his position on the hill of Tzompach.

The number of killed in his own ranks had been very small, notwithstanding the severe loss inflicted on the enemy. These few he was careful to bury

where they could not be discovered, anxious to conceal not only the amount of the slain, but the fact that the whites were mortal.[14] But very many of the men were wounded, and all the horses. The trouble of the Spaniards was much enhanced by the want of many articles important to them in their present exigency. They had neither oil nor salt, which, as before noticed, was not to be obtained in Tlascala. Their clothing, accommodated to a softer climate, was ill adapted to the rude air of the mountains; and bows and arrows, as Bernal Diaz sarcastically remarks, formed an indifferent protection against the inclemency of the weather.[15]

Still, they had much to cheer them in the events of the day; and they might draw from them a reasonable ground for confidence in their own resources, such as no other experience could have supplied. Not that the results could authorize anything like contempt for their Indian foe. Singly and with the same weapons, he might have stood his ground against the Spaniard.[16] But the suc-

[14] So says Bernal Diaz; who at the same time, by the epithets *los muertos, los cuerpos,* plainly contradicts his previous boast that only one Christian fell in the fight. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65.) Cortés has not the grace to acknowledge that one.

[15] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 6.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 32.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65, 66.—The warm, chivalrous glow of feeling which colors the rude composition of the last chronicler makes him a better painter than his more correct and classical rivals. And, if there is somewhat too much of the self-complacent tone of the *quorum pars magna fui* in his writing, it may be pardoned in the hero of more than a hundred battles and almost as many wounds.

[16] The Anonymous Conqueror bears emphatic testimony to the valor of the Indians, specifying instances in which he had seen a single

cess of the day established the superiority of science and discipline over mere physical courage and numbers. It was fighting over again, as we have said, the old battle of the European and the Asiatic. But the handful of Greeks who routed the hosts of Xerxes and Darius, it must be remembered, had not so obvious an advantage on the score of weapons as was enjoyed by the Spaniards in these wars. The use of fire-arms gave an ascendency which cannot easily be estimated; one so great, that a contest between nations equally civilized, which should be similar in all other respects to that between the Spaniards and the Tlascalans, would probably be attended with a similar issue. To all this must be added the effect produced by the cavalry. The nations of Anahuac had no large domesticated animals, and were unacquainted with any beast of burden. Their imaginations were bewildered when they beheld the strange apparition of the horse and his rider moving in unison and obedient to one impulse, as if possessed of a common nature; and as they saw the terrible animal, with his "neck clothed in thunder," bearing down their squadrons and trampling them in the dust, no wonder they should have regarded him with the mysterious terror felt for a supernatural being. A very little reflection on the manifold grounds of superiority, both moral and physical, possessed by the Spaniards in this contest, will

warrior defend himself for a long time against two, three, and even four Spaniards! "Sono fra loro di valētissimi huomini et che ossano morir ostinatissimamēte. Et io ho veduto un d' essi difendersi valetemente da duoi caualli leggieri, et un altro da tre, et quattro." Rēl. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

surely explain the issue, without any disparagement to the courage or capacity of their opponents.[17]

Cortés, thinking the occasion favorable, followed up the important blow he had struck by a new mission to the capital, bearing a message of similar import with that recently sent to the camp. But the senate was not yet sufficiently humbled. The late defeat caused, indeed, general consternation. Maxixcatzin, one of the four great lords who presided over the republic, reiterated with greater force the arguments before urged by him for embracing the proffered alliance of the strangers. The armies of the state had been beaten too often to allow any reasonable hope of successful resistance; and he enlarged on the generosity shown by the politic Conqueror to his prisoners—so unusual in Anahuac—as an additional motive for an alliance with men who knew how to be friends as well as foes.

But in these views he was overruled by the war-party, whose animosity was sharpened, rather than subdued, by the late discomfiture. Their hostile feelings were further exasperated by the younger Xicotencatl, who burned for an opportunity to retrieve his disgrace, and to wipe away the stain which had fallen for the first time on the arms of the republic.

In their perplexity they called in the assistance of the priests, whose authority was frequently in-

[17] The appalling effect of the cavalry on the natives reminds one of the confusion into which the Roman legions were thrown by the strange appearance of the elephants in their first engagements with Pyrrhus, as told by Plutarch in his life of that prince.

voked in the deliberations of the American chiefs. The latter inquired, with some simplicity, of these interpreters of fate, whether the strangers were supernatural beings, or men of flesh and blood like themselves. The priests, after some consultation, are said to have made the strange answer that the Spaniards, though not gods, were children of the Sun, that they derived their strength from that luminary, and when his beams were withdrawn their powers would also fail. They recommended a night-attack, therefore, as one which afforded the best chance of success. This apparently childish response may have had in it more of cunning than credulity. It was not improbably suggested by Xicotencatl himself, or by the caciques in his interest, to reconcile the people to a measure which was contrary to the military usages—indeed, it may be said, to the public law—of Anahuac. Whether the fruit of artifice or superstition, it prevailed; and the Tlascalan general was empowered, at the head of a detachment of ten thousand warriors, to try the effect of an assault by night on the Christian camp.

The affair was conducted with such secrecy that it did not reach the ears of the Spaniards. But their general was not one who allowed himself, sleeping or waking, to be surprised on his post. Fortunately, the night appointed was illumined by the full beams of an autumnal moon; and one of the vedettes perceived by its light, at a considerable distance, a large body of Indians moving towards the Christian lines. He was not slow in giving the alarm to the garrison.

The Spaniards slept, as has been said, with their arms by their side; while their horses, picketed near them, stood ready saddled, with the bridle hanging at the bow. In five minutes the whole camp was under arms; when they beheld the dusky columns of the Indians cautiously advancing over the plain, their heads just peering above the tall maize with which the land was partially covered. Cortés determined not to abide the assault in his intrenchments, but to sally out and pounce on the enemy when he had reached the bottom of the hill.

Slowly and stealthily the Indians advanced, while the Christian camp, hushed in profound silence, seemed to them buried in slumber. But no sooner had they reached the slope of the rising ground than they were astounded by the deep battle-cry of the Spaniards, followed by the instantaneous apparition of the whole army, as they sallied forth from the works and poured down the sides of the hill. Brandishing aloft their weapons, they seemed to the troubled fancies of the Tlascalans like so many spectres or demons hurrying to and fro in mid air, while the uncertain light magnified their numbers and expanded the horse and his rider into gigantic and unearthly dimensions.

Scarcely awaiting the shock of their enemy, the panic-struck barbarians let off a feeble volley of arrows, and, offering no other resistance, fled rapidly and tumultuously across the plain. The horse easily overtook the fugitives, riding them down and cutting them to pieces without mercy, until Cortés, weary with slaughter, called off his men,

leaving the field loaded with the bloody trophies of victory.[18]

The next day, the Spanish commander, with his usual policy after a decisive blow had been struck, sent a new embassy to the Tlascalan capital. The envoys received their instructions through the interpreter, Marina. That remarkable woman had attracted general admiration by the constancy and cheerfulness with which she endured all the privations of the camp. Far from betraying the natural weakness and timidity of her sex, she had shrunk from no hardship herself, and had done much to fortify the drooping spirits of the soldiers; while her sympathies, whenever occasion offered, had been actively exerted in mitigating the calamities of her Indian countrymen.[19]

Through his faithful interpreter, Cortés communicated the terms of his message to the Tlascalan envoys. He made the same professions of amity as before, promising oblivion of all past injuries; but, if this proffer were rejected, he would visit their capital as a conqueror, raze every house in it to the ground, and put every inhabitant to the sword! He then dismissed the ambassadors

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 53, 54.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 2, cap. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 32.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 8.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

[19] "Though she heard them every day talk of killing us and eating our flesh, though she had seen us surrounded in past battles, and knew that we were now all of us wounded and suffering, yet we never saw any weakness in her, but a courage far beyond that of woman." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

with the symbolical presents of a letter in one hand and an arrow in the other.

The envoys obtained respectful audience from the council of Tlascala, whom they found plunged in deep dejection by their recent reverses. The failure of the night-attack had extinguished every spark of hope in their bosoms. Their armies had been beaten again and again, in the open field and in secret ambush. Stratagem and courage, all their resources, had alike proved ineffectual against a foe whose hand was never weary and whose eye was never closed. Nothing remained but to submit. They selected four principal caciques, whom they intrusted with a mission to the Christian camp. They were to assure the strangers of a free passage through the country, and a friendly reception in the capital. The proffered friendship of the Spaniards was cordially embraced, with many awkward excuses for the past. The envoys were to touch at the Tlascalan camp on their way, and inform Xicotencatl of their proceedings. They were to require him, at the same time, to abstain from all further hostilities and to furnish the white men with an ample supply of provisions.

But the Tlascalan deputies, on arriving at the quarters of that chief, did not find him in the humor to comply with these instructions. His repeated collisions with the Spaniards, or, it may be, his constitutional courage, left him inaccessible to the vulgar terrors of his countrymen. He regarded the strangers not as supernatural beings, but as men like himself. The animosity of a warrior had

rankled into a deadly hatred from the mortifications he had endured at their hands, and his head teemed with plans for recovering his fallen honors and for taking vengeance on the invaders of his country. He refused to disband any of the force, still formidable, under his command, or to send supplies to the enemy's camp. He further induced the ambassadors to remain in his quarters and relinquish their visit to the Spaniards. The latter, in consequence, were kept in ignorance of the movements in their favor which had taken place in the Tlascalan capital.[20]

The conduct of Xicotencatl is condemned by Castilian writers as that of a ferocious and sanguinary barbarian. It is natural they should so regard it. But those who have no national prejudice to warp their judgments may come to a different conclusion. They may find much to admire in that high, unconquerable spirit, like some proud column standing alone in its majesty amidst the fragments and ruins around it. They may see evidences of a clear-sighted sagacity, which, piercing the thin veil of insidious friendship proffered by the Spaniards, and penetrating the future, discerned the coming miseries of his country; the noble patriotism of one who would rescue that country at any cost, and, amidst the gathering darkness, would infuse his own intrepid spirit into the hearts of his nation, to animate them to a last struggle for independence.

[20] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 67.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

CHAPTER IV

DISCONTENTS IN THE ARMY—TLASCALAN SPIES—PEACE WITH THE REPUBLIC—EMBASSY FROM MONTEZUMA

1519

DESIROUS to keep up the terror of the Castilian name by leaving the enemy no respite, Cortés, on the same day that he despatched the embassy to Tlascala, put himself at the head of a small corps of cavalry and light troops to scour the neighboring country. He was at that time so ill from fever, aided by medical treatment,[1] that he could hardly keep his seat in the saddle. It was a rough country, and the sharp winds from the frosty summits of the mountains pierced the scanty covering of the troops and chilled both men and horses. Four or five of the animals gave out, and the general, alarmed for their safety, sent them back to the camp. The soldiers, discouraged by this ill omen, would have persuaded him to return. But he made answer, " We fight under the banner

[1] The effect of the medicine—though rather a severe dose, according to the precise Diaz—was suspended during the general's active exertions. Gomara, however, does not consider this a miracle. (Crónica, cap. 49.) Father Sandoval does. (Hist. de Cárlos Quinto, tom. i. p. 127.) Solís, after a conscientious inquiry into this perplexing matter, decides—strange as it may seem—against the father! Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 20.

of the Cross; God is stronger than nature," [2] and continued his march.

It led through the same kind of checkered scenery of rugged hill and cultivated plain as that already described, well covered with towns and villages, some of them the frontier posts occupied by the Otomies. Practising the Roman maxim of lenity to the submissive foe, he took full vengeance on those who resisted, and, as resistance too often occurred, marked his path with fire and desolation. After a short absence, he returned in safety, laden with the plunder of a successful foray. It would have been more honorable to him had it been conducted with less rigor. The excesses are imputed by Bernal Diaz to the Indian allies, whom in the heat of victory it was found impossible to restrain.[3] On whose head soever they fall, they seem to have given little uneasiness to the general, who declares in his letter to the emperor Charles the Fifth, " As we fought under the standard of the Cross,[4] for

[2] " Dios es sobre natura." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 54.

[3] Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.—Not so Cortés, who says, boldly, " I burned more than ten towns." (Ibid., p. 52.) His reverend commentator specifies the localities of the Indian towns destroyed by him in his forays. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, pp. ix–xi.

[4] [Lorenzana speaks of two standards as borne by Cortés in the Conquest, one having the image of the Virgin emblazoned on it, the other that of the Cross. It may be the latter which is still preserved in the Museum of Artillery at Madrid. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52, nota.) In a letter written to me from that capital, a few years since, by my friend Mr. George Summer, he remarks, " In Madrid, in the Museum of Artillery, is a small mahogany box, about a foot square, locked and sealed, which contains, as the inscription above it states, the *pendon* which Hernan Cortés carried to the conquest of Mexico. On applying to the Brigadier Leon de Palacio, the director of the museum, he was so kind as not only to order this to be opened, but to come himself with me to examine it. The

the true Faith, and the service of your Highness, Heaven crowned our arms with such success that, while multitudes of the infidel were slain, little loss was suffered by the Castilians." [5] The Spanish Conquerors, to judge from their writings, unconscious of any worldly motive lurking in the bottom of their hearts, regarded themselves as soldiers of the Church, fighting the great battle of Christianity, and in the same edifying and comfortable light are regarded by most of the national historians of a later day.[6]

On his return to the camp, Cortés found a new cause of disquietude, in discontents which had broken out among the soldiery. Their patience was exhausted by a life of fatigue and peril to which there seemed to be no end. The battles they had won against such tremendous odds had not advanced them a jot. The idea of their reaching Mexico, says the old soldier so often quoted, "was treated as a jest by the whole army;" [7] and the indefinite prospect of hostilities with the ferocious

standard is probably the same which Lorenzana, in 1770, speaks of as being then in the Secretario de Gobierno. It is of red Damascus silk, and has marks of the painting once upon it, but is now completely in rags."]

[5] "E como trayamos la Bandera de la Cruz, y puñabamos por nuestra Fe, y por servicio de Vuestra Sacra Magestad, en su muy Real ventura nos dió Dios tanta victoria, que les matámos mucha gente, sin que los nuestros recibiessen daño." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.

[6] "It was a notable thing," exclaims Herrera, "to see with what humility and devotion all returned praising God, who gave them victories so miraculous, by which it was clearly apparent that they were favored with the divine assistance."

[7] "Porque entrar en México, teníamoslo por cosa de risa, á causa de sus grandes fuerças." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

people among whom they were now cast threw a deep gloom over their spirits.

Among the malecontents were a number of noisy, vaporing persons, such as are found in every camp, who, like empty bubbles, are sure to rise to the surface and make themselves seen in seasons of agitation. They were, for the most part, of the old faction of Velasquez, and had estates in Cuba, to which they turned many a wistful glance as they receded more and more from the coast. They now waited on the general, not in a mutinous spirit of resistance (for they remembered the lesson in Villa Rica), but with the design of frank expostulation, as with a brother adventurer in a common cause.[8] The tone of familiarity thus assumed was eminently characteristic of the footing of equality on which the parties in the expedition stood with one another.

Their sufferings, they told him, were too great to be endured. All the men had received one, most of them two or three wounds. More than fifty had perished, in one way or another, since leaving Vera Cruz. There was no beast of burden but led a life preferable to theirs. For, when the night came, the former could rest from his labors; but they, fighting or watching, had no rest, day nor night. As to conquering Mexico, the very thought of it

[8] Diaz indignantly disclaims the idea of mutiny, which Gomara attached to this proceeding. "What they said to him was by way of counsel, and because they believed it were well said, and not with any other intent, since they followed him ever, bravely and loyally; nor is it strange that in an army some good soldiers should offer counsel to their captain, especially when such hardships have been endured as were by us." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 71.

was madness. If they had encountered such opposition from the petty republic of Tlascala, what might they not expect from the great Mexican empire? There was now a temporary suspension of hostilities. They should avail themselves of it to retrace their steps to Vera Cruz. It is true, the fleet there was destroyed; and by this act, unparalleled for rashness even in Roman annals, the general had become responsible for the fate of the whole army. Still there was one vessel left. That might be despatched to Cuba for reinforcements and supplies; and, when these arrived, they would be enabled to resume operations with some prospect of success.

Cortés listened to this singular expostulation with perfect composure. He knew his men, and, instead of rebuke or harsher measures, replied in the same frank and soldier-like vein which they had affected.

There was much truth, he allowed, in what they said. The sufferings of the Spaniards had been great; greater than those recorded of any heroes in Greek or Roman story. So much the greater would be their glory. He had often been filled with admiration as he had seen his little host encircled by myriads of barbarians, and felt that no people but Spaniards could have triumphed over such formidable odds. Nor could they, unless the arm of the Almighty had been over them. And they might reasonably look for his protection hereafter; for was it not in his cause they were fighting? They had encountered dangers and difficulties, it was true. But they had not come here

expecting a life of idle dalliance and pleasure. Glory, as he had told them at the outset, was to be won only by toil and danger. They would do him the justice to acknowledge that he had never shrunk from his share of both. This was a truth, adds the honest chronicler who heard and reports the dialogue, which no one could deny. But, if they had met with hardships, he continued, they had been everywhere victorious. Even now they were enjoying the fruits of this, in the plenty which reigned in the camp. And they would soon see the Tlascalans, humbled by their late reverses, suing for peace on any terms. To go back now was impossible. The very stones would rise up against them. The Tlascalans would hunt them in triumph down to the water's edge. And how would the Mexicans exult at this miserable issue of their vain-glorious vaunts! Their former friends would become their enemies; and the Totonacs, to avert the vengeance of the Aztecs, from which the Spaniards could no longer shield them, would join in the general cry. There was no alternative, then, but to go forward in their career. And he besought them to silence their pusillanimous scruples, and, instead of turning their eyes towards Cuba, to fix them on Mexico, the great object of their enterprise.

While this singular conference was going on, many other soldiers had gathered round the spot; and the discontented party, emboldened by the presence of their comrades, as well as by the general's forbearance, replied that they were far from being convinced. Another such victory as the last

would be their ruin. They were going to Mexico only to be slaughtered. Until, at length, the general's patience being exhausted, he cut the argument short, by quoting a verse from an old song, implying that it was better to die with honor than to live disgraced,—a sentiment which was loudly echoed by the greater part of his audience, who, notwithstanding their occasional murmurs, had no design to abandon the expedition, still less the commander to whom they were passionately devoted. The malecontents, disconcerted by this rebuke, slunk back to their own quarters, muttering half-smothered execrations on the leader who had projected the enterprise, the Indians who had guided him, and their own countrymen who supported him in it.[9]

Such were the difficulties that lay in the path of Cortés: a wily and ferocious enemy; a climate uncertain, often unhealthy; illness in his own person, much aggravated by anxiety as to the manner in which his conduct would be received by his sovereign; last, not least, disaffection among his soldiers, on whose constancy and union he rested for the success of his operations,—the great lever by which he was to overturn the empire of Montezuma.

On the morning following this event, the camp

[9] This conference is reported, with some variety, indeed, by nearly every historian. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 55.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 51, 52, —Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 9.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.) I have abridged the account given by Bernal Diaz, one of the audience, though not one of the parties to the dialogue,—for that reason the better authority.

was surprised by the appearance of a small body of Tlascalans, decorated with badges, the white color of which intimated peace. They brought a quantity of provisions, and some trifling ornaments, which, they said, were sent by the Tlascalan general, who was weary of the war and desired an accommodation with the Spaniards. He would soon present himself to arrange this in person. The intelligence diffused general joy, and the emissaries received a friendly welcome.

A day or two elapsed, and, while a few of the party left the Spanish quarters, the others, about fifty in number, who remained, excited some distrust in the bosom of Marina. She communicated her suspicions to Cortés that they were spies. He caused several of them, in consequence, to be arrested, examined them separately, and ascertained that they were employed by Xicotencatl to inform him of the state of the Christian camp, preparatory to a meditated assault, for which he was mustering his forces. Cortés, satisfied of the truth of this, determined to make such an example of the delinquents as should intimidate his enemy from repeating the attempt. He ordered their hands to be cut off, and in that condition sent them back to their countrymen, with the message "that the Tlascalans might come by day or night; they would find the Spaniards ready for them." [10]

[10] Diaz says only seventeen lost their hands, the rest their thumbs. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 70.) Cortés does not flinch from confessing, the hands of the whole fifty: "I ordered that all the fifty should have their hands cut off; and I sent them to tell their lord that let him come when he would, by night or day, they should see who we were." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 53.

The doleful spectacle of their comrades returning in this mutilated state filled the Indian camp with horror and consternation. The haughty crest of their chief was humbled. From that moment he lost his wonted buoyancy and confidence. His soldiers, filled with superstitious fear, refused to serve longer against a foe who could read their very thoughts and divine their plans before they were ripe for execution.[11]

The punishment inflicted by Cortés may well shock the reader by its brutality. But it should be considered, in mitigation, that the victims of it were spies, and, as such, by the laws of war, whether among civilized or savage nations, had incurred the penalty of death. The amputation of the limbs was a milder punishment, and reserved for inferior offences. If we revolt at the barbarous nature of the sentence, we should reflect that it was no uncommon one at that day; not more uncommon, indeed, than whipping and branding with a hot iron were in our own country at the beginning of the present century, or than cropping the ears was in the preceding one. A higher civilization, indeed, rejects such punishments, as pernicious in themselves, and degrading to humanity. But in the sixteenth century they were openly recognized by the laws of the most polished nations in Europe. And it is too much to ask of any man, still less one bred to the iron trade of war, to be in advance of the refinement of his age. We

[11] "De que los Tlascaltecas se admiráron, entendiendo que Cortés les entendia sus pensamientos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

may be content if, in circumstances so unfavorable to humanity he does not fall below it.

All thoughts of further resistance being abandoned, the four delegates of the Tlascalan republic were now allowed to proceed on their mission. They were speedily followed by Xicotencatl himself, attended by a numerous train of military retainers. As they drew near the Spanish lines, they were easily recognized by the white and yellow colors of their uniforms, the livery of the house of Titcala. The joy of the army was great at this sure intimation of the close of hostilities; and it was with difficulty that Cortés was enabled to restore the men to tranquillity and the assumed indifference which it was proper to maintain in presence of an enemy.

The Spaniards gazed with curious eye on the valiant chief who had so long kept his enemies at bay, and who now advanced with the firm and fearless step of one who was coming rather to bid defiance than to sue for peace. He was rather above the middle size, with broad shoulders, and a muscular frame intimating great activity and strength. His head was large, and his countenance marked with the lines of hard service rather than of age, for he was but thirty-five. When he entered the presence of Cortés, he made the usual salutation by touching the ground with his hand and carrying it to his head; while the sweet incense of aromatic gums rolled up in clouds from the censers carried by his slaves.

Far from a pusillanimous attempt to throw the blame on the senate, he assumed the whole respon-

sibility of the war. He had considered the white men, he said, as enemies, for they came with the allies and vassals of Montezuma. He loved his country, and wished to preserve the independence which she had maintained through her long wars with the Aztecs. He had been beaten. They might be the strangers who, it had been so long predicted, would come from the east, to take possession of the country. He hoped they would use their victory with moderation, and not trample on the liberties of the republic. He came now in the name of his nation, to tender their obedience to the Spaniards, assuring them they would find his countrymen as faithful in peace as they had been firm in war.

Cortés, far from taking umbrage, was filled with admiration at the lofty spirit which thus disdained to stoop beneath misfortunes. The brave man knows how to respect bravery in another. He assumed, however, a severe aspect, as he rebuked the chief for having so long persisted in hostilities. Had Xicotencatl believed the word of the Spaniards, and accepted their proffered friendship sooner, he would have spared his people much suffering, which they well merited by their obstinacy. But it was impossible, continued the general, to retrieve the past. He was willing to bury it in oblivion, and to receive the Tlascalans as vassals to the emperor, his master. If they proved true, they should find him a sure column of support; if false, he would take such vengeance on them as he had intended to take on their capital had they not speedily given in their submission. It proved an

ominous menace for the chief to whom it was addressed.

The cacique then ordered his slaves to bring forward some trifling ornaments of gold and feather-embroidery, designed as presents. They were of little value, he said, with a smile, for the Tlascalans were poor. They had little gold, not even cotton, nor salt. The Aztec emperor had left them nothing but their freedom and their arms. He offered this gift only as a token of his good will. "As such I receive it," answered Cortés, "and, coming from the Tlascalans, set more value on it than I should from any other source, though it were a house full of gold;"—a politic as well as magnanimous reply, for it was by the aid of this good will that he was to win the gold of Mexico.[12]

Thus ended the bloody war with the fierce republic of Tlascala, during the course of which the fortunes of the Spaniards more than once had trembled in the balance. Had it been persevered in but a little longer, it must have ended in their confusion and ruin, exhausted as they were by wounds, watching, and fatigues, with the seeds of disaffection rankling among themselves. As it was, they came out of the fearful contest with untarnished glory. To the enemy they seemed invulnerable, bearing charmed lives, proof alike against the accidents of fortune and the assaults of man. No wonder that they indulged a similar conceit in their own bosoms, and that the humblest Spaniard

[12] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 56, 57.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 53.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 71, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.

should have fancied himself the subject of a special interposition of Providence, which shielded him in the hour of battle and reserved him for a higher destiny.

While the Tlascalans were still in the camp, an embassy was announced from Montezuma. Tidings of the exploits of the Spaniards had spread far and wide over the plateau. The emperor, in particular, had watched every step of their progress, as they climbed the steeps of the Cordilleras and advanced over the broad table-land on their summit. He had seen them, with great satisfaction, take the road to Tlascala, trusting that, if they were mortal men, they would find their graves there. Great was his dismay when courier after courier brought him intelligence of their successes, and that the most redoubtable warriors on the plateau had been scattered like chaff by the swords of this handful of strangers.

His superstitious fears returned in full force. He saw in the Spaniards "the men of destiny," who were to take possession of his sceptre. In his alarm and uncertainty, he sent a new embassy to the Christian camp. It consisted of five great nobles of his court, attended by a train of two hundred slaves. They brought with them a present, as usual, dictated partly by fear and in part by the natural munificence of his disposition. It consisted of three thousand ounces of gold, in grains, or in various manufactured articles, with several hundred mantles and dresses of embroidered cotton and the picturesque feather-work. As they laid these at the feet of Cortés, they told him they had

come to offer the congratulations of their master on the late victories of the white men. The emperor only regretted that it would not be in his power to receive them in his capital, where the numerous population was so unruly that their safety would be placed in jeopardy. The mere intimation of the Aztec emperor's wishes, in the most distant way, would have sufficed with the Indian nations. It had very little weight with the Spaniards; and the envoys, finding this puerile expression of them ineffectual, resorted to another argument, offering a tribute in their master's name to the Castilian sovereign, provided the Spaniards would relinquish their visit to his capital. This was a greater error: it was displaying the rich casket with one hand which he was unable to defend with the other. Yet the author of this pusillanimous policy, the unhappy victim of superstition, was a monarch renowned among the Indian nations for his intrepidity and enterprise,—the terror of Anahuac!

Cortés, while he urged his own sovereign's commands as a reason for disregarding the wishes of Montezuma, uttered expressions of the most profound respect for the Aztec prince, and declared that if he had not the means of requiting his munificence, as he could wish, at present, he trusted *to repay him, at some future day, with good works!* [13]

The Mexican ambassadors were not much gratified with finding the war at an end, and a recon-

[13] "Cortés recibió con alegría aquel presente, y dixo que se lo tenia en merced, y que él lo pagaria al señor Monteçuma en buenas obras." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 73.

ciliation established between their mortal enemies and the Spaniards. The mutual disgust of the two parties with each other was too strong to be repressed even in the presence of the general, who saw with satisfaction the evidences of a jealousy which, undermining the strength of the Indian emperor, was to prove the surest source of his own success.[14]

Two of the Aztec envoys returned to Mexico, to acquaint their sovereign with the state of affairs in the Spanish camp. The others remained with the army, Cortés being willing that they should be personal spectators of the deference shown him by the Tlascalans. Still he did not hasten his departure for their capital. Not that he placed reliance on the injurious intimations of the Mexicans respecting their good faith. Yet he was willing to put this to some longer trial, and at the same time to re-establish his own health more thoroughly before his visit. Meanwhile, messengers daily arrived from the city, pressing his journey, and were finally followed by some of the aged rulers of the republic, attended by a numerous retinue, impatient of his long delay. They brought with them a body of five hundred *tamanes,* or *men of burden,* to drag his cannon and relieve his own forces from

[14] He dwells on it in his letter to the emperor. "Seeing the discord and division between them, I felt not a little pleasure, for it appeared to me to suit well with my design, and that through this means I might the more easily subjugate them. Moreover I remembered a text of the Evangelist, which says, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.' I treated therefore with both parties, and thanked each in secret for the intelligence it had given me, professing to regard it with greater friendship than the other." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 61.

this fatiguing part of their duty. It was impossible to defer his departure longer; and after mass, and a solemn thanksgiving to the great Being who had crowned their arms with triumph, the Spaniards bade adieu to the quarters which they had occupied for nearly three weeks on the hill of Tzompach. The strong tower, or *teocalli,* which commanded it, was called, in commemoration of their residence, "the tower of victory;" and the few stones which still survive of its ruins point out to the eye of the traveller a spot ever memorable in history for the courage and constancy of the early Conquerors.[15]

[15] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 10.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 72–74.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

CHAPTER V

SPANIARDS ENTER TLASCALA—DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPITAL—ATTEMPTED CONVERSION—AZTEC EMBASSY—INVITED TO CHOLULA

1519

THE city of Tlascala, the capital of the republic of the same name, lay at the distance of about six leagues from the Spanish camp. The road led into a hilly region, exhibiting in every arable patch of ground the evidence of laborious cultivation. Over a deep *barranca,* or ravine, they crossed on a bridge of stone, which, according to tradition,—a slippery authority,—is the same still standing, and was constructed originally for the passage of the army.[1] They passed some considerable towns on their route, where they experienced a full measure of Indian hospitality. As they advanced, the approach to a populous city was intimated by the crowds who flocked out to see

[1] "Á distancia de un quarto de legua caminando á esta dicha ciudad se encuentra una barranca honda, que tiene para pasar *un Puente de cal y canto de bóreda,* y es tradicion en el pueblo de San Salvador, que se hizo en aquellos dias, que estubo allí Cortés para que pasase." (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. xi.) If the antiquity of this *arched* stone bridge could be established, it would settle a point much mooted in respect to Indian architecture. But the construction of so solid a work in so short a time is a fact requiring a better voucher than the villagers of San Salvador.

and welcome the strangers; men and women in their picturesque dresses, with bunches and wreaths of roses, which they gave to the Spaniards, or fastened to the necks and caparisons of their horses, in the same manner as at Cempoalla. Priests, with their white robes, and long matted tresses floating over them, mingled in the crowd, scattering volumes of incense from their burning censers. In this way, the multitudinous and motley procession defiled through the gates of the ancient capital of Tlascala. It was the twenty-third of September, 1519, the anniversary of which is still celebrated by the inhabitants as a day of jubilee.[2]

The press was now so great that it was with difficulty the police of the city could clear a passage for the army; while the *azoteas,* or flat terraced roofs of the buildings, were covered with spectators, eager to catch a glimpse of the wonderful strangers. The houses were hung with festoons of flowers, and arches of verdant boughs, intertwined with roses and honeysuckle, were thrown across the streets. The whole population abandoned itself to rejoicing; and the air was rent with songs and shouts of triumph, mingled with the wild music of the national instruments, that might have excited apprehensions in the breasts of the soldiery had they not gathered their peaceful import from the

[2] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 53.—"Recibimiento el mas solene y famoso que en el mundo se ha visto," exclaims the enthusiastic historian of the republic. He adds that "more than a hundred thousand men flocked out to receive the Spaniards; a thing that appears impossible," *que parece cosa imposible!* It does indeed. Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

assurance of Marina and the joyous countenances of the natives.

With these accompaniments, the procession moved along the principal streets to the mansion of Xicotencatl, the aged father of the Tlascalan general, and one of the four rulers of the republic. Cortés dismounted from his horse to receive the old chieftain's embrace. He was nearly blind, and satisfied, as far as he could, a natural curiosity respecting the person of the Spanish general, by passing his hand over his features. He then led the way to a spacious hall in his palace, where a banquet was served to the army. In the evening they were shown to their quarters, in the buildings and open ground surrounding one of the principal *teocallis;* while the Mexican ambassadors, at the desire of Cortés, had apartments assigned them next to his own, that he might the better watch over their safety in this city of their enemies.[3]

Tlascala was one of the most important and populous towns on the table-land. Cortés, in his letter to the emperor, compares it to Granada,* affirming that it was larger, stronger, and more populous than the Moorish capital at the time of the conquest, and quite as well built.[4] But, not-

[3] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 59.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 11.

[4] "La qual ciudad es tan grande, y de tanta admiracion, que aunque mucho de lo, que de ella podria decir, dexe, lo poco que diré creo es

* [So Coronado compared Zuñi and Granada. What both meant was probably that the cities, if properly defended, would be as hard to capture as Granada.—M.]

withstanding we are assured by a most respectable writer at the close of the last century that its remains justify the assertion,[5] we shall be slow to believe that its edifices could have rivalled those monuments of Oriental magnificence, whose light, aerial forms still survive after the lapse of ages, the admiration of every traveller of sensibility and taste. The truth is, that Cortés, like Columbus, saw objects through the warm medium of his own fond imagination, giving them a higher tone of coloring and larger dimensions than were strictly warranted by the fact. It was natural that the man who had made such rare discoveries should unconsciously magnify their merits to his own eyes and to those of others.

The houses were built, for the most part, of mud or earth; the better sort of stone and lime, or bricks dried in the sun. They were unprovided with doors or windows, but in the apertures for the former hung mats fringed with pieces of copper or something which, by its tinkling sound, would give notice of any one's entrance. The streets were narrow and dark. The population must have been considerable,* if, as Cortés asserts, thirty thousand souls were often gathered in the market on a public

casi increible, porque es muy mayor que Granada, y muy mas fuerte, y de tan buenos Edificios, y de muy murcha mas gente, que Granada tenia al tiempo que se ganó." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 58.

[5] "En las Ruinas, que aun hoy se vén en Tlaxcala, se conoce, que no es ponderacion." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 58. Nota del editor, Lorenzana.

* [About the same as that of Cholula, which Bandelier estimated at 30,000.—M.]

day. These meetings were a sort of fairs, held, as usual in all the great towns, every fifth day, and attended by the inhabitants of the adjacent country, who brought there for sale every description of domestic produce and manufacture with which they were acquainted. They peculiarly excelled in pottery, which was considered as equal to the best in Europe.[6] It is a further proof of civilized habits that the Spaniards found barbers' shops, and baths both of vapor and hot water, familiarly used by the inhabitants. A still higher proof of refinement may be discerned in a vigilant police which repressed everything like disorder among the people.[7]

The city was divided into four quarters, which might rather be called so many separate towns, since they were built at different times, and separated from each other by high stone walls, defining their respective limits. Over each of these districts ruled one of the four great chiefs of the republic, occupying his own spacious mansion * and surrounded by his own immediate vassals. Strange arrangement,—and more strange that it should have been compatible with social order and tranquillity! The ancient capital, through one quarter of which flowed the rapid current of the Zahuatl,

[6] "Nullum est fictile vas apud nos, quod arte superet ab illis vasa formata." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.

[7] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 59.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—The last historian enumerates such a number of contemporary Indian authorities for his narrative as of itself argues no inconsiderable degree of civilization in the people.

* [One of the great communal houses.—M.]

stretched along the summits and sides of hills, at whose base are now gathered the miserable remains of its once flourishing population.[8] Far beyond, to the southeast, extended the bold sierra of Tlascala, and the huge Malinche, crowned with the usual silver diadem of the highest Andes, having its shaggy sides clothed with dark-green forests of firs, gigantic sycamores, and oaks whose towering stems rose to the height of forty or fifty feet, unencumbered by a branch. The clouds, which sailed over from the distant Atlantic, gathered round the lofty peaks of the sierra, and, settling into torrents, poured over the plains in the neighborhood of the city, converting them, at such seasons, into swamps. Thunder-storms, more frequent and terrible here than in other parts of the table-land, swept down the sides of the mountains and shook the frail tenements of the capital to their foundations. But, although the bleak winds of the sierra gave an austerity to the climate, unlike the sunny skies and genial temperature of the lower regions, it was far more favorable to the development of both the physical and moral energies. A bold and hardy peasantry was nurtured among the recesses of the hills, fit equally to cultivate the land in peace and to defend it in war. Unlike the spoiled child of Nature, who derives such facilities of subsistence from her too prodigal hand as supersede the necessity of exertion on his own part, the

[8] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 12.—The population of a place which Cortés could compare with Granada had dwindled by the beginning of the present century to 3400 inhabitants, of whom less than a thousand were of the Indian stock. See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 158.

Tlascalan earned his bread—from a soil not ungrateful, it is true—by the sweat of his brow. He led a life of temperance and toil. Cut off by his long wars with the Aztecs from commercial intercourse, he was driven chiefly to agricultural labor, the occupation most propitious to purity of morals and sinewy strength of constitution. His honest breast glowed with the patriotism, or local attachment to the soil, which is the fruit of its diligent culture; while he was elevated by a proud consciousness of independence, the natural birthright of the child of the mountains. Such was the race with whom Cortés was now associated for the achievement of his great work.

Some days were given by the Spaniards to festivity, in which they were successively entertained at the hospitable boards of the four great nobles, in their several quarters of the city. Amidst these friendly demonstrations, however, the general never relaxed for a moment his habitual vigilance, or the strict discipline of the camp; and he was careful to provide for the security of the citizens by prohibiting, under severe penalties, any soldier from leaving his quarters without express permission. Indeed, the severity of his discipline provoked the remonstrance of more than one of his officers, as a superfluous caution; and the Tlascalan chiefs took some exception at it, as inferring an unreasonable distrust of them. But, when Cortés explained it, as in obedience to an established military system, they testified their admiration, and the ambitious young general of the republic

proposed to introduce it, if possible, into his own ranks.[9]

The Spanish commander, having assured himself of the loyalty of his new allies, next proposed to accomplish one of the great objects of his mission, their conversion to Christianity. By the advice of Father Olmedo, always opposed to precipitate measures, he had deferred this till a suitable opportunity presented itself for opening the subject. Such a one occurred when the chiefs of the state proposed to strengthen the alliance with the Spaniards by the intermarriage of their daughters with Cortés and his officers. He told them this could not be while they continued in the darkness of infidelity. Then, with the aid of the good friar, he expounded as well as he could the doctrines of the Faith, and, exhibiting the image of the Virgin with the infant Redeemer, told them that there was the God in whose worship alone they would find salvation, while that of their own false idols would sink them in eternal perdition.

It is unnecessary to burden the reader with a recapitulation of his homily, which contained, probably, dogmas quite as incomprehensible to the untutored Indian as any to be found in his own rude mythology. But, though it failed to convince his audience, they listened with a deferential awe. When he had finished, they replied they had no doubt that the God of the Christians must be a good and a great God, and as such they were will-

[9] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54, 55.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 75.

ing to give him a place among the divinities of Tlascala. The polytheistic system of the Indians, like that of the ancient Greeks, was of that accommodating kind which could admit within its elastic folds the deities of any other religion, without violence to itself.[10] But every nation, they continued, must have its own appropriate and tutelary deities. Nor could they, in their old age, abjure the service of those who had watched over them from youth. It would bring down the vengeance of their gods, and of their own nation, who were as warmly attached to their religion as their liberties, and would defend both with the last drop of their blood!

It was clearly inexpedient to press the matter further at present. But the zeal of Cortés, as usual, waxing warm by opposition, had now mounted too high for him to calculate obstacles; nor would he have shrunk, probably, from the crown of martyrdom in so good a cause. But, fortunately, at least for the success of his temporal cause, this crown was not reserved for him.

The good monk, his ghostly adviser, seeing the course things were likely to take, with better judgment interposed to prevent it. He had no desire, he said, to see the same scenes acted over again as at Cempoalla. He had no relish for forced con-

[10] Camargo notices this elastic property in the religions of Anahuac: "Este modo de hablar y decir que les querrá dar otro Dios, es saber que cuando estas gentes tenian noticia de algun Dios de buenas propiedades y costumbres, que le rescibiesen admitiéndole por tal, porque otras gentes advenedizas trujéron muchos ídolos que tubiéron por Dioses, y á este fin y propósito decian, que Cortés les traia otro Dios." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

versions. They could hardly be lasting. The growth of an hour might well die with the hour. Of what use was it to overturn the altar, if the idol remained enthroned in the heart? or to destroy the idol itself, if it were only to make room for another? Better to wait patiently the effect of time and teaching to soften the heart and open the understanding, without which there could be no assurance of a sound and permanent conviction. These rational views were enforced by the remonstrances of Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, and those in whom Cortés placed most confidence; till, driven from his original purpose, the military polemic consented to relinquish the attempt at conversion for the present, and to refrain from a repetition of scenes which, considering the different mettle of the population, might have been attended with very different results from those at Cozumel and Cempoalla.[11]

In the course of our narrative we have had occasion to witness more than once the good effects of the interposition of Father Olmedo. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that his discretion in spiritual matters contributed as essentially to the success of the expedition as did the sagacity and

[11] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 56.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 76, 77.—This is not the account of Camargo. According to him, Cortés gained his point: the nobles led the way by embracing Christianity, and the idols were broken. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) But Camargo was himself a Christianized Indian, who lived in the next generation after the Conquest, and may very likely have felt as much desire to relieve his nation from the reproach of infidelity as a modern Spaniard would to scour out the stain—*mala raza y mancha*—of Jewish or Moorish lineage from his escutcheon.

courage of Cortés in temporal. He was a true disciple in the school of Las Casas. His heart was unscathed by that fiery fanaticism which sears and hardens whatever it touches. It melted with the warm glow of Christian charity. He had come out to the New World as a missionary among the heathen, and he shrank from no sacrifice but that of the welfare of the poor benighted flock to whom he had consecrated his days. If he followed the banners of the warrior, it was to mitigate the ferocity of war, and to turn the triumphs of the Cross to a good account for the natives themselves, by the spiritual labors of conversion. He afforded the uncommon example—not to have been looked for, certainly, in a Spanish monk of the sixteenth century—of enthusiasm controlled by reason, a quickening zeal tempered by the mild spirit of toleration.

But, though Cortés abandoned the ground of conversion for the present, he compelled the Tlascalans to break the fetters of the unfortunate victims reserved for sacrifice; an act of humanity unhappily only transient in its effects, since the prisons were filled with fresh victims on his departure.

He also obtained permission for the Spaniards to perform the services of their own religion unmolested. A large cross was erected in one of the great courts or squares. Mass was celebrated every day in the presence of the army and of crowds of natives, who, if they did not comprehend its full import, were so far edified that they learned to reverence the religion of their conquerors. The

direct interposition of Heaven, however, wrought more for their conversion than the best homily of priest or soldier. Scarcely had the Spaniards left the city—the tale is told on very respectable authority—when a thin, transparent cloud descended and settled like a column on the cross, and, wrapping it round in its luminous folds, continued to emit a soft, celestial radiance through the night, thus proclaiming the sacred character of the symbol, on which was shed the halo of divinity![12]

The principle of toleration in religious matters being established, the Spanish general consented to receive the daughters of the caciques. Five or six of the most beautiful of the Indian maidens were assigned to as many of his principal officers, after they had been cleansed from the stains of infidelity by the waters of baptism. They received, as usual, on this occasion, good Castilian names, in exchange for the barbarous nomenclaturn of their own vernacular.[13] Among them, Xicotencatl's daughter, Doña Luisa, as she was called after her baptism, was a princess of the highest estimation and authority in Tlascala. She was given by her father to Alvarado, and their posterity intermarried with the noblest families of Castile. The frank and joyous manners of this cavalier made him a great favorite with the Tlas-

[12] The miracle is reported by Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 15), and *believed* by Solís. Conquista de Méjico, lib. 3, cap. 5.

[13] To avoid the perplexity of selection, it was common for the missionary to give the same names to all the Indians baptized on the same day. Thus, one day was set apart for the Johns, another for the Peters, and so on; an ingenious arrangement, much more for the convenience of the clergy than of the converts. See Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

calans; and his bright, open countenance, fair complexion, and golden locks gave him the name of *Tonatiuh,* the "Sun." The Indians often pleased their fancies by fastening a *sobriquet,* or some characteristic epithet, on the Spaniards. As Cortés was always attended, on public occasions, by Doña Marina, or Malinche, as she was called by the natives, they distinguished him by the same name. By these epithets, originally bestowed in Tlascala, the two Spanish captains were popularly designated among the Indian nations.[14]

While these events were passing, another embassy arrived from the court of Mexico. It was charged, as usual, with a costly donative of embossed gold plate, and rich embroidered stuffs of cotton and feather-work. The terms of the message might well argue a vacillating and timid temper in the monarch, did they not mask a deeper policy. He now invited the Spaniards to his capital, with the assurance of a cordial welcome. He besought them to enter into no alliance with the base and barbarous Tlascalans; and he invited them to take the route of the friendly city of Cholula, where arrangements, according to his orders, were made for their reception.[15]

[14] Ibid., MS.—Bernal Diaz. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 74, 77.—According to Camargo, the Tlascalans gave the Spanish commander three hundred damsels to wait on Marina; and the kind treatment and instruction they received led some of the chiefs to surrender their own daughters, "con propósito de que *si acaso* algunas se empreñasen quedase entre ellos generacion de hombres tan valientes y temidos."

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 80.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 60.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Cortés notices only one Aztec mission, while Diaz speaks of three. The former, from brevity, falls so much short of the whole truth, and

The Tlascalans viewed with deep regret the general's proposed visit to Mexico. Their reports fully confirmed all he had before heard of the power and ambition of Montezuma. His armies, they said, were spread over every part of the continent. His capital was a place of great strength, and as, from its insular position, all communication could be easily cut off with the adjacent country, the Spaniards, once entrapped there, would be at his mercy. His policy, they represented, was as insidious as his ambition was boundless. "Trust not his fair words," they said, "his courtesies, and his gifts. His professions are hollow, and his friendships false." When Cortés remarked that he hoped to bring about a better understanding between the emperor and them, they replied it would be impossible; however smooth his words, he would hate them at heart.

They warmly protested, also, against the general's taking the route of Cholula. The inhabitants, not brave in the open field, were more dangerous from their perfidy and craft. They were Montezuma's tools, and would do his bidding. The Tlascalans seemed to combine with this distrust a superstitious dread of the ancient city, the headquarters of the religion of Anahuac. It was here that the god Quetzalcoatl held the pristine seat of his empire. His temple was celebrated

the latter, from forgetfulness perhaps, goes so much beyond it, that it is not always easy to decide between them. Diaz did not compile his narrative till some fifty years after the Conquest; a lapse of time which may excuse many errors, but must considerably impair our confidence in the minute accuracy of his details. A more intimate acquaintance with his chronicle does not strengthen this confidence.

throughout the land, and the priests were confidently believed to have the power, as they themselves boasted, of opening an inundation from the foundations of his shrine, which should bury their enemies in the deluge. The Tlascalans further reminded Cortés that, while so many other and distant places had sent to him at Tlascala to testify their good will and offer their allegiance to his sovereigns, Cholula, only six leagues distant, had done neither. The last suggestion struck the general more forcibly than any of the preceding. He instantly despatched a summons to the city, requiring a formal tender of its submission.

Among the embassies from different quarters which had waited on the Spanish commander, while at Tlascala, was one from Ixtlilxochitl, son of the great Nezahualpilli, and an unsuccessful competitor with his elder brother—as noticed in a former part of our narrative—for the crown of Tezcuco.[16] Though defeated in his pretensions, he had obtained a part of the kingdom, over which he ruled with a deadly feeling of animosity towards his rival, and to Montezuma, who had sustained him. He now offered his services to Cortés, asking his aid, in return, to place him on the throne of his ancestors. The politic general returned such an answer to the aspiring young prince as might encourage his expectations and attach him to his interests. It was his aim to strengthen his cause by attracting to himself every particle of disaffection that was floating through the land.

[16] *Ante*, p. 306.

It was not long before deputies arrived from Cholula, profuse in their expressions of good will, and inviting the presence of the Spaniards in their capital. The messengers were of low degree, far beneath the usual rank of ambassadors. This was pointed out by the Tlascalans; and Cortés regarded it as a fresh indignity. He sent in consequence a new summons, declaring if they did not instantly send him a deputation of their principal men he would deal with them as *rebels* to his own sovereign, the rightful lord of these realms![17] The menace had the desired effect. The Cholulans were not inclined to contest, at least for the present, his magnificent pretensions. Another embassy appeared in the camp, consisting of some of the highest nobles; who repeated the invitation for the Spaniards to visit their city, and excused their own tardy appearance by apprehensions for their personal safety in the capital of their enemies. The explanation was plausible, and was admitted by Cortés.

The Tlascalans were now more than ever opposed to his projected visit. A strong Aztec force, they had ascertained, lay in the neighborhood of Cholula, and the people were actively placing their city in a posture of defence. They suspected

[17] "Si no viniessen, iria sobre ellos, y los destruíria, y procederia contra ellos como contra personas rebeldes; diciéndoles, como todas estas Partes, y otras muy mayores Tierras, y Señoríos eran de Vuestra Alteza." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 63.) "Rebellion" was a very convenient term, fastened in like manner by the countrymen of Cortés on the Moors for defending the possessions which they had held for eight centuries in the Peninsula. It justified very rigorous reprisals. (See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part I., chap. 13, et alibi.)

some insidious scheme concerted by Montezuma to destroy the Spaniards.

These suggestions disturbed the mind of Cortés, but did not turn him from his purpose. He felt a natural curiosity to see the venerable city so celebrated in the history of the Indian nations. He had, besides, gone too far to recede,—too far, at least, to do so without a show of apprehension implying a distrust in his own resources which could not fail to have a bad effect on his enemies, his allies, and his own men. After a brief consultation with his officers, he decided on the route to Cholula.[18]

It was now three weeks since the Spaniards had taken up their residence within the hospitable walls of Tlascala, and nearly six since they entered her territory. They had been met on the threshold as enemies, with the most determined hostility. They were now to part with the same people as friends and allies; fast friends, who were to stand by them, side by side, through the whole of their arduous struggle. The result of their visit, therefore, was of the last importance; since on the co-operation of these brave and warlike republicans greatly depended the ultimate success of the expedition.

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 62, 63.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.

CHAPTER VI

CITY OF CHOLULA—GREAT TEMPLE—MARCH TO CHOLULA—RECEPTION OF THE SPANIARDS—CONSPIRACY DETECTED

1519

THE ancient city of Cholula, capital of the republic of that name, lay nearly six leagues south of Tlascala, and about twenty east, or rather southeast, of Mexico. It was said by Cortés to contain twenty thousand houses within the walls, and as many more in the environs;[1] though now dwindled to a population of less than sixteen thousand souls.[2] Whatever was its real number of inhabitants, it was unquestionably, at the time of the Conquest, one of the most populous and flourishing cities in New Spain.

It was of great antiquity, and was founded by the primitive races who overspread the land before the Aztecs.[3] We have few particulars of its form

[1] Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.—According to Las Casas, the place contained 30,000 *vecinos*, or about 150,000 inhabitants. (Brevissima Relatione della Distruttione dell' Indie Occidentale (Venetia, 1643). This latter, being the smaller estimate, is *a priori* the more credible; especially—a rare occurrence—when in the pages of the good Bishop of Chiapa.

[2] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. p. 159.

[3] Veytia carries back the foundation of the city to the Ulmecs, a people who preceded the Toltecs. (Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 13, 20.)

of government, which seems to have been cast on a republican model similar to that of Tlascala.* This answered so well that the state maintained its independence down to a very late period, when, if not reduced to vassalage by the Aztecs, it was so far under their control as to enjoy few of the benefits of a separate political existence. Their connection with Mexico brought the Cholulans into frequent collision with their neighbors and kindred the Tlascalans. But, although far superior to them in refinement and the various arts of civilization, they were no match in war for the bold mountaineers, the Swiss of Anahuac. The Cholulan capital was the great commercial emporium of the plateau. The inhabitants excelled in various mechanical arts, especially that of working in metals, the manufacture of cotton and agave cloths, and of a delicate kind of pottery, rivalling, it was said, that of Florence in beauty.[4] But such

As the latter, after occupying the land several centuries, have left not a single written record, probably, of their existence, it will be hard to disprove the licentiate's assertion,—still harder to prove it.

[4] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.†

* [The older authorities agree in stating that Cholula was democratically governed. Bandelier (Studies about Cholula and its Vicinity, in his Report of an Archæological Tour in Mexico in 1881) concludes that there were in the community six kins. Torquemada says the tribal council consisted of six speakers. The tribe was governed by two chief executives (called Aquiach and Tlalquiach). Their functions were partly warlike, as is evidenced by their appellations "eagle" and "tiger," and partly religious. The tribe occupied one large pueblo, with a few smaller groups, possibly twenty, scattered about it, of which perhaps two deserved the title of villages. The population of the pueblo may have been 30,000 in 1519. The estimate of houses which Cortés gives is too large. Moreover, a large number of houses in each pueblo was always unoccupied.—M.]

† ["We find that, according to tradition, the territory of Cholula was, up to the year 1519, necessarily occupied by at least three dif-

attention to the arts of a polished and peaceful community naturally indisposed them to war, and disqualified them for coping with those who made war the great business of life. The Cholulans were accused of effeminacy, and were less distinguished —it is the charge of their rivals—by their courage than their cunning.[5]

But the capital, so conspicuous for its refinement and its great antiquity, was even more venerable for the religious traditions which invested it. It was here that the god Quetzalcoatl paused in his passage to the coast, and passed twenty years in teaching the Toltec inhabitants the arts of civilization. He made them acquainted with better forms of government, and a more spiritualized religion, in which the only sacrifices were the fruits and flowers of the season.[6] It is not easy to determine what he taught, since his lessons have been so mingled with the licentious dogmas of his own priests and the mystic commentaries of the Christian missionary.[7] It is probable that he was one of

[5] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.

[6] Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 15, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 5; lib. 3.

[7] Later divines have found in these teachings of the Toltec god, or high-priest, the germs of some of the great mysteries of the Christian faith, as those of the Incarnation, and the Trinity, for example.

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ferent stocks. The modes of burial, so far as ascertained, reveal an equal number of distinct customs. The architecture, so far as it is possible to investigate it, shows at least two separate types. . . . Finally we may ask if the facts, that the adobe bricks of the great mound contain pottery and obsidian, and that skulls have been found beneath its projecting western apron, do not hint at a still older population, with perhaps a different style of architecture." Bandelier, Archæological Tour, p. 261.—M.]

those rare and gifted beings who, dissipating the darkness of the age by the illumination of their own genius, are deified by a grateful posterity and placed among the lights of heaven.

It was in honor of this benevolent deity that the stupendous mound* was erected on which the traveller still gazes with admiration as the most colossal fabric in New Spain, rivalling in dimensions, and somewhat resembling in form, the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt. The date of its erection is unknown; for it was found there when the Aztecs entered on the plateau. It had the form common to the Mexican *teocallis,* that of a truncated pyramid, facing with its four sides the cardinal points, and divided into the same number of terraces. Its original outlines, however, have been effaced by the action of time and of the elements, while the exuberant growth of shrubs and wild flowers, which have mantled over its surface,

In the teacher himself they recognize no less a person than St. Thomas the Apostle! See the Dissertation of the irrefragable Dr. Mier, with an edifying commentary by Señor Bustamante, ap. Sahagun. (Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. i., Suplemento.) The reader will find further particulars of this matter in the essay on the Origin of the Mexican Civilization, at the end of the first book of this history.

* [The most careful measurements of the great mound, or "pyramid," were those made by Bandelier in 1881. He found the base to be a trapeze. North line, 1000 feet; east line, 1026 feet; south line, 833 feet; west line, 1000 feet; total, 3859 feet. This would give an approximate area of over twenty acres for the base. Measuring the height of the mound from each of its four sides, he found the average altitude to be 169 feet. There is not a trace of aboriginal work upon the summit. The structure was built long before the Nahuatl period. It was not erected at one time, but grew as necessity ordered. It was a place of refuge and its top was used as a place of worship.—M.]

give it the appearance of one of those symmetrical elevations thrown up by the caprice of nature rather than by the industry of man. It is doubtful indeed, whether the interior be not a natural hill; though it seems not improbable that it is an artificial composition of stone and earth, deeply incrusted, as is certain, in every part, with alternate strata of brick and clay.[8]

The perpendicular height of the pyramid is one hundred and seventy-seven feet. Its base is one thousand four hundred and twenty-three feet long, twice as long as that of the great pyramid of Cheops. It may give some idea of its dimensions to state that its base, which is square, covers about forty-four acres, and the platform on its truncated summit embraces more than one. It reminds us of those colossal monuments of brickwork which are still seen in ruins on the banks of the Euphrates, and, in much higher preservation, on those of the Nile.[9]

On the summit stood a sumptuous temple, in

[8] Such, on the whole, seems to be the judgment of M. de Humboldt, who has examined this interesting monument with his usual care. (Vues des Cordillères, p. 27, et seq.—Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 150, et seq.) The opinion derives strong confirmation from the fact that a road, cut some years since across the tumulus, laid open a large section of it, in which the alternate layers of brick and clay are distinctly visible. (Ibid., loc. cit.) The present appearance of this monument, covered over with the verdure and vegetable mould of centuries, excuses the scepticism of the more superficial traveller.

[9] Several of the pyramids of Egypt, and the ruins of Babylon, are, as is well known, of brick. An inscription on one of the former, indeed, celebrates this material as superior to stone. (Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 136.)—Humboldt furnishes an apt illustration of the size of the Mexican *teocalli*, by comparing it to a mass of bricks covering a square four times as large as the Place Vendôme, and of twice the height of the Louvre. Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 152.

which was the image of the mystic deity, "god of the air," with ebon features, unlike the fair complexion which he bore upon earth, wearing a mitre on his head waving with *plumes of fire,* with a resplendent collar of gold round his neck, pendants of mosaic turquoise in his ears, a jewelled sceptre in one hand, and a shield curiously painted, the emblem of his rule over the winds, in the other.[10] The sanctity of the place, hallowed by hoary tradition, and the magnificence of the temple and its services, made it an object of veneration throughout the land, and pilgrims from the farthest corners of Anahuac came to offer up their devotions at the shrine of Quetzalcoatl.[11] The number of these was so great as to give an air of mendicity to the motley population of the city; and Cortés, struck with the novelty, tells us that he saw multitudes of beggars, such as are to be found in the enlightened capitals of Europe;[12]—a whimsical criterion of civilization, which must place our own prosperous land somewhat low in the scale.

Cholula was not the resort only of the indigent devotee. Many of the kindred races had temples of their own in the city, in the same manner as some Christian nations have in Rome, and each temple

[10] A minute account of the costume and insignia of Quetzalcoatl is given by Father Sahagun, who saw the Aztec gods before the arm of the Christian convert had tumbled them from "their pride of place." See Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 3.

[11] They came from the distance of two hundred leagues, says Torquemada. Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.

[12] "Hay mucha gente pobre, y que piden entre los Ricos por las Calles, y por las Casas, y Mercados, como hacen los Pobres en España, y en otras partes que hay *Gente de razon.*" Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 67, 68.

was provided with its own peculiar ministers for the service of the deity to whom it was consecrated. In no city was there seen such a concourse of priests, so many processions, such pomp of ceremonial, sacrifice, and religious festivals. Cholula was, in short, what Mecca is among Mahometans, or Jerusalem among Christians; it was the Holy City of Anahuac.[13] *

The religious rites were not performed, however, in the pure spirit originally prescribed by its tutelary deity. His altars, as well as those of the numerous Aztec gods, were stained with human blood; and six thousand victims *are said* to have been annually offered up at their sanguinary shrines![14] The great number of these may be estimated from the declaration of Cortés that he counted four hundred towers in the city;[15] yet no temple had more than two, many only one. High above the rest rose the great "pyramid of Cholula," with its undying fires flinging their radiance

[13] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 61.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[14] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

[15] "E certifico á Vuestra Alteza, que yo conté desde una Mezquita quatrocientas, y tantas Torres en la dicha Ciudad, y todas son de Mezquitas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

* [Cholula was not a "Holy City" or pilgrim resort for other tribes. "It suffices to recall the state of intertribal warfare which prevailed in aboriginal Mexico to establish the utter fallacy of this pretension.... Even the preëminence which Quetzalcohuatl, the chief idol of Cholula, is said to have enjoyed over the whole of Central Mexico is vigorously denied by the Indians of Tlascala and of the Mexican valley itself." Cholula was a great mart of trade and crowds flocked to it because of that fact. Outside Indians were accustomed to bring presents to its chief idol. See Bandelier, Arch. Tour, pp. 168, 169. —M.]

far and wide over the capital, and proclaiming to the nations that there was the mystic worship—alas! how corrupted by cruelty and superstition!—of the good deity who was one day to return and resume his empire over the land.

Nothing could be more grand than the view which met the eye from the area on the truncated summit of the pyramid. Towards the west stretched that bold barrier of porphyritic rock which nature has reared around the Valley of Mexico, with the huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two colossal sentinels to guard the entrance to the enchanted region. Far away to the east was seen the conical head of Orizaba soaring high into the clouds and nearer, the barren though beautifully-shaped Sierra de la Malinche, throwing its broad shadows over the plains of Tlascala. Three of these are volcanoes higher than the highest mountain-peak in Europe, and shrouded in snows which never melt under the fierce sun of the tropics. At the foot of the spectator* lay the sacred city of Cholula, with its bright towers and pinnacles sparkling in the sun, reposing amidst gardens and verdant groves, which then thickly studded the cultivated environs of the capi-

* [Bandelier (Gilded Man, p. 259) shows that the spectator who stood on the "truncated summit of the pyramid" was standing upon a structure which had long been in ruins, and which was covered with bushes when Cortés passed through the country. On the summit was a "little ancient temple." There was no trace of a large building, and the pyramid looked so much like a wooded hill that the Conquerors regarded it as a natural elevation. No pinnacles sparkled in the sun, because the architecture of the natives did not include those features. The houses were for the most part only one story high, and were whitewashed.—M.]

tal. Such was the magnificent prospect which met the gaze of the Conquerors, and may still, with slight change, meet that of the modern traveller, as from the platform of the great pyramid his eye wanders over the fairest portion of the beautiful plateau of Puebla.[16]

But it is time to return to Tlascala. On the appointed morning the Spanish army took up its march to Mexico by the way of Cholula. It was followed by crowds of the citizens, filled with admiration at the intrepidity of men who, so few in number, would venture to brave the great Montezuma in his capital. Yet an immense body of warriors offered to share the dangers of the expedition; but Cortés, while he showed his gratitude for their good will, selected only six thousand of the volunteers to bear him company.[17] He was

[16] The city of Puebla de los Angeles was founded by the Spaniards soon after the Conquest, on the site of an insignificant village in the territory of Cholula, a few miles to the east of that capital. It is, perhaps, the most considerable city in New Spain, after Mexico itself, which it rivals in beauty. It seems to have inherited the religious preëminence of the ancient Cholula, being distinguished, like her, for the number and splendor of its churches, the multitude of its clergy, and the magnificence of its ceremonies and festivals. These are fully displayed in the pages of travellers who have passed through the place on the usual route from Vera Cruz to the capital. (See, in particular, Bullock's Mexico, vol. i. chap. 6.) The environs of Cholula, still irrigated as in the days of the Aztecs, are equally remarkable for the fruitfulness of the soil. The best wheat-lands, according to a very respectable authority, yield in the proportion of eighty for one. Ward's Mexico, vol. ii. p. 270.—See, also, Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 158; tom. iv. p. 330.

[17] According to Cortés, a hundred thousand men offered their services on this occasion! "And although I forbade it, and requested that they would not go, since there was no necessity for it, yet I was followed by as many as a hundred thousand men well fitted for war, who came with me to the distance of nearly two leagues from the city, and then through my pressing importunities were induced to

unwilling to encumber himself with an unwieldy force that might impede his movements, and probably did not care to put himself so far in the power of allies whose attachment was too recent to afford sufficient guarantee for their fidelity.

After crossing some rough and hilly ground, the army entered on the wide plain which spreads out for miles around Cholula. At the elevation of more than six thousand feet above the sea, they beheld the rich products of various climes growing side by side, fields of towering maize, the juicy aloe, the *chilli* or Aztec pepper, and large plantations of the cactus, on which the brilliant cochineal is nourished. Not a rood of land but was under cultivation;[18] and the soil—an uncommon thing on the table-land—was irrigated by numerous streams and canals, and well shaded by woods, that have disappeared before the rude axe of the Spaniards. Towards evening they reached a small stream, on the banks of which Cortés determined to take up his quarters for the night, being unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of the city by introducing so large a force into it at an unseasonable hour.

Here he was soon joined by a number of Cholulan caciques and their attendants, who came to view and welcome the strangers. When they saw

return, with the exception of five or six thousand, who continued in my company." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 64.) This, which must have been nearly the whole fighting force of the republic, does not startle Oviedo (Hist. de las Ind., MS., cap. 4) nor Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.

[18] The words of the *Conquistador* are yet stronger. "There is not a *hand's-breadth* of land that is not cultivated." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

their Tlascalan enemies in the camp, however, they exhibited signs of displeasure, and intimated an apprehension that their presence in the town might occasion disorder. The remonstrance seemed reasonable to Cortés, and he accordingly commanded his allies to remain in their present quarters, and to join him as he left the city on the way to Mexico.

On the following morning he made his entrance at the head of his army into Cholula, attended by no other Indians than those from Cempoalla, and a handful of Tlascalans, to take charge of the baggage. His allies, at parting, gave him many cautions respecting the people he was to visit, who, while they affected to despise them as a nation of traders, employed the dangerous arms of perfidy and cunning. As the troops drew near the city, the road was lined with swarms of people of both sexes and every age, old men tottering with infirmity, women with children in their arms, all eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, whose persons, weapons, and horses were objects of intense curiosity to eyes which had not hitherto ever encountered them in battle. The Spaniards, in turn, were filled with admiration at the aspect of the Cholulans, much superior in dress and general appearance to the nations they had hitherto seen. They were particularly struck with the costume of the higher classes, who wore fine embroidered mantles, resembling the graceful *albornoz,* or Moorish cloak, in their texture and fashion.[19] They showed

[19] "All the inhabitants of rank wear, besides their other clothing, *albornoces,* differing from those of Africa inasmuch as they have pockets, but very similar in form, in material, and in the bordering." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

the same delicate taste for flowers as the other tribes of the plateau, decorating their persons with them, and tossing garlands and bunches among the soldiers. An immense number of priests mingled with the crowd, swinging their aromatic censers, while music from various kinds of instruments gave a lively welcome to the visitors, and made the whole scene one of gay, bewildering enchantment. If it did not have the air of a triumphal procession so much as at Tlascala, where the melody of instruments was drowned by the shouts of the multitude, it gave a quiet assurance of hospitality and friendly feeling not less grateful.

The Spaniards were also struck with the cleanliness of the city, the width and great regularity of the streets, which seemed to have been laid out on a settled plan, with the solidity of the houses, and the number and size of the pyramidal temples.* In the court of one of these, and its surrounding buildings, they were quartered.[20]

[20] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4. —Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 82.—The Spaniards compared Cholula to the beautiful Valladolid, according to Herrera, whose description of the entry is very animated: "Saliéronle otro dia á recibir mas de diez mil ciudadanos en diversas tropas, con rosas, flores, pan, aves, i frutas, i mucha música. Llegaba vn esquadron á dar la bien llegada á Hernando Cortés, i con buena órden se iba apartando, dando lugar á que otro llegase. . . . En llegando

* ["According to tradition Cortés was lodged in the present southwestern quarter of the city, which is now called Santa Maria Tecpan, the Tecpan being the communal house where strange visitors were received. In the middle of the quarter there still stands, in the Calle-de-Herreros, an ancient portal, with the inscription in the Nahuatl language and Latin letters, 'Here stood the Tecpan, where now is the house of Antonio de la Cruz.'" Bandelier, Gilded Man, p. 272.—M.]

They were soon visited by the principal lords of the place, who seemed solicitous to provide them with accommodations. Their table was plentifully supplied, and, in short, they experienced such attentions as were calculated to dissipate their suspicions, and made them impute those of their Tlascalan friends to prejudice and old national hostility.

In a few days the scene changed. Messengers arrived from Montezuma, who, after a short and unpleasant intimation to Cortés that his approach occasioned much disquietude to their master, conferred separately with the Mexican ambassadors still in the Castilian camp, and then departed, taking one of the latter along with them. From this time the deportment of their Cholulan hosts underwent a visible alteration. They did not visit the quarters as before, and, when invited to do so, excused themselves on pretence of illness. The supply of provisions was stinted, on the ground that they were short of maize. These symptoms of alienation, independently of temporary embarrassment, caused serious alarm in the breast of Cortés, for the future. His apprehensions were not allayed by the reports of the Cempoallans, who told him that in wandering round the city they had

á la ciudad, que pareció mucho á los Castellanos, en el asiento, i perspectiva, á Valladolid, salió la demas gente, quedando mui espantada de ver las figuras, talles, i armas de los Castellanos. Salióron los sacerdotes con vestiduras blancas, como sobrepellices, i algunas cerradas por delante, los braços defuera, con fluecos de algodon en las orillas. Unos llevaban figuras de ídolos en las manos, otros sahumerios; otros tocaban cornetas, atabalejos, i diversas músicas, i todos iban cantando, i llegaban á encensar á los Castellanos. Con esta pompa entráron en Chulula." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 1.

seen several streets barricadoed, the *azoteas,* or flat roofs of the houses, loaded with huge stones and other missiles,* as if preparatory to an assault, and in some places they had found holes covered over with branches, and upright stakes planted within, as if to embarrass the movements of the cavalry.[21] Some Tlascalans coming in, also, from their camp, informed the general that a great sacrifice, mostly of children, had been offered up in a distant quarter of the town, to propitiate the favor of the gods, apparently for some intended enterprise. They added that they had seen numbers of the citizens leaving the city with their women and children, as if to remove them to a place of safety. These tidings confirmed the worst suspicions of Cortés, who had no doubt that some hostile scheme was in agitation. If he had felt any, a discovery by Marina, the good angel of the expedition, would have turned these doubts into certainty.

The amiable manners of the Indian girl had won her the regard of the wife of one of the caciques, who repeatedly urged Marina to visit her house, darkly intimating that in this way she would escape the fate that awaited the Spaniards. The interpreter, seeing the importance of obtaining further

[21] Cortés, indeed, noticed these same alarming appearances on his entering the city, thus suggesting the idea of a premeditated treachery. "On the road we noticed many indications such as the natives of this province had told us of; for we found the royal road barred up and another opened, and some holes dug,—though not many,—and some of the streets of the city barricadoed, and many stones upon the roofs; which put us more upon our guard and caused us to exercise great caution." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 64.

* [But there were always heaps of stones and other missiles kept for defence on the flat roofs of the houses in the unwalled cities. —M.]

intelligence at once, pretended to be pleased with the proposal, and affected, at the same time, great discontent with the white men, by whom she was detained in captivity. Thus throwing the credulous Cholulan off her guard, Marina gradually insinuated herself into her confidence, so far as to draw from her a full account of the conspiracy.

It originated, she said, with the Aztec emperor, who had sent rich bribes to the great caciques, and to her husband among others, to secure them in his views. The Spaniards were to be assaulted as they marched out of the capital, when entangled in its streets, in which numerous impediments had been placed to throw the cavalry into disorder. A force of twenty thousand Mexicans was already quartered at no great distance from the city, to support the Cholulans in the assault. It was confidently expected that the Spaniards, thus embarrassed in their movements, would fall an easy prey to the superior strength of their enemy. A sufficient number of prisoners was to be reserved to grace the sacrifices of Cholula; the rest were to be led in fetters to the capital of Montezuma.

While this conversation was going on, Marina occupied herself with putting up such articles of value and wearing apparel as she proposed to take with her in the evening, when she could escape unnoticed from the Spanish quarters to the house of her Cholulan friend, who assisted her in the operation. Leaving her visitor thus employed, Marina found an opportunity to steal away for a few moments, and, going to the general's apartment, disclosed to him her discoveries. He immediately

caused the cacique's wife to be seized, and, on examination, she fully confirmed the statement of his Indian mistress.

The intelligence thus gathered by Cortés filled him with the deepest alarm. He was fairly taken in the snare. To fight or to fly seemed equally difficult. He was in a city of enemies, where every house might be converted into a fortress, and where such embarrassments were thrown in the way as might render the manœuvres of his artillery and horse nearly impracticable. In addition to the wily Cholulans, he must cope, under all these disadvantages, with the redoubtable warriors of Mexico. He was like a traveller who has lost his way in the darkness among precipices, where any step may dash him to pieces, and where to retreat or to advance is equally perilous.

He was desirous to obtain still further confirmation and particulars of the conspiracy. He accordingly induced two of the priests in the neighborhood, one of them a person of much influence in the place, to visit his quarters. By courteous treatment, and liberal largesses of the rich presents he had received from Montezuma,—thus turning his own gifts against the giver,—he drew from them a full confirmation of the previous report. The emperor had been in a state of pitiable vacillation since the arrival of the Spaniards. His first orders to the Cholulans were to receive the strangers kindly. He had recently consulted his oracles anew, and obtained for answer that Cholula would be the grave of his enemies; for the gods would be sure to support him in avenging the sacrilege of-

fered to the Holy City. So confident were the Aztecs of success, that numerous manacles, or poles with thongs which served as such, were already in the place to secure the prisoners.

Cortés, now feeling himself fully possessed of the facts, dismissed the priests, with injunctions of secrecy, scarcely necessary. He told them it was his purpose to leave the city on the following morning, and requested that they would induce some of the principal caciques to grant him an interview in his quarters. He then summoned a council of his officers, though, as it seems, already determined as to the course he was to take.

The members of the council were differently affected by the startling intelligence, according to their different characters. The more timid, disheartened by the prospect of obstacles which seemed to multiply as they drew nearer the Mexican capital, were for retracing their steps and seeking shelter in the friendly city of Tlascala. Others, more persevering, but prudent, were for taking the more northerly route, originally recommended by their allies. The greater part supported the general, who was ever of opinion that they had no alternative but to advance. Retreat would be ruin. Half-way measures were scarcely better, and would infer a timidity which must discredit them with both friend and foe. Their true policy was to rely on themselves,—to strike such a blow as should intimidate their enemies and show them that the Spaniards were as incapable of being circumvented by artifice as of being crushed by weight of numbers and courage in the open field.

When the caciques, persuaded by the priests, appeared before Cortés, he contented himself with gently rebuking their want of hospitality, and assured them the Spaniards would be no longer a burden to their city, as he proposed to leave it early on the following morning. He requested, moreover, that they would furnish a reinforcement of two thousand men to transport his artillery and baggage. The chiefs, after some consultation, acquiesced in a demand which might in some measure favor their own designs.

On their departure, the general summoned the Aztec ambassadors before him. He briefly acquainted them with his detection of the treacherous plot to destroy his army, the contrivance of which, he said, was imputed to their master, Montezuma. It grieved him much, he added, to find the emperor implicated in so nefarious a scheme, and that the Spaniards must now march as enemies against the prince whom they had hoped to visit as a friend.

The ambassadors, with earnest protestations, asserted their entire ignorance of the conspiracy, and their belief that Montezuma was equally innocent of a crime which they charged wholly on the Cholulans. It was clearly the policy of Cortés to keep on good terms with the Indian monarch, to profit as long as possible by his good offices, and to avail himself of his fancied security—such feelings of security as the general could inspire him with—to cover his own future operations. He affected to give credit, therefore, to the assertion of the envoys, and declared his unwillingness to be-

lieve that a monarch who had rendered the Spaniards so many friendly offices would now consummate the whole by a deed of such unparalleled baseness. The discovery of their twofold duplicity, he added, sharpened his resentment against the Cholulans, on whom he would take such vengeance as should amply requite the injuries done both to Montezuma and the Spaniards. He then dismissed the ambassadors, taking care, notwithstanding this show of confidence, to place a strong guard over them, to prevent communication with the citizens.[22]

That night was one of deep anxiety to the army. The ground they stood on seemed loosening beneath their feet, and any moment might be the one marked for their destruction. Their vigilant general took all possible precautions for their safety, increasing the number of the sentinels, and posting his guns in such a manner as to protect the approaches to the camp. His eyes, it may well be believed, did not close during the night. Indeed, every Spaniard lay down in his arms, and every horse stood saddled and bridled, ready for instant service. But no assault was meditated by the Indians, and the stillness of the hour was undisturbed except by the occasional sounds, heard in a populous city, even when buried in slumber, and by the hoarse cries of the priests from the turrets of the

[22] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 59.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 65.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 39.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 83, cap. 4.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 1.—Argensola, Anales, lib. 1, caps. 85.

teocallis, proclaiming through their trumpets the watches of the night.[23]

[23] "Las horas de la noche las regulaban por las estrellas, y tocaban los ministros del templo que estaban destinados para este fin, ciertos instrumentos como vocinas, con que hacian conocer al pueblo el tiempo." Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 14.

CHAPTER VII

TERRIBLE MASSACRE—TRANQUILLITY RESTORED—REFLECTIONS ON THE MASSACRE—FURTHER PROCEEDINGS—ENVOYS FROM MONTEZUMA

1519

WITH the first streak of morning light, Cortés was seen on horseback, directing the movements of his little band. The strength of his forces he drew up in the great square or court, surrounded partly by buildings, as before noticed, and in part by a high wall. There were three gates of entrance, at each of which he placed a strong guard. The rest of his troops, with his great guns, he posted without the enclosure, in such a manner as to command the avenues and secure those within from interruption in their bloody work. Orders had been sent the night before to the Tlascalan chiefs to hold themselves ready, at a concerted signal, to march into the city and join the Spaniards.

The arrangements were hardly completed, before the Cholulan caciques appeared, leading a body of levies, *tamanes,* even more numerous than had been demanded. They were marched at once into the square, commanded, as we have seen, by the Spanish infantry, which was drawn up under the walls. Cortés then took some of the caciques

aside. With a stern air, he bluntly charged them with the conspiracy, showing that he was well acquainted with all the particulars. He had visited their city, he said, at the invitation of their emperor; had come as a friend; had respected the inhabitants and their property; and, to avoid all cause of umbrage, had left a great part of his forces without the walls. They had received him with a show of kindness and hospitality, and, reposing on this, he had been decoyed into the snare, and found this kindness only a mask to cover the blackest perfidy.

The Cholulans were thunderstruck at the accusation. An undefined awe crept over them as they gazed on the mysterious strangers and felt themselves in the presence of beings who seemed to have the power of reading the thoughts scarcely formed in their bosoms. There was no use in prevarication or denial before such judges. They confessed the whole, and endeavored to excuse themselves by throwing the blame on Montezuma. Cortés, assuming an air of higher indignation at this, assured them that the pretence should not serve, since, even if well founded, it would be no justification; and he would now make such an example of them for their treachery that the report of it should ring throughout the wide borders of Anahuac!

The fatal signal, the discharge of an arquebuse, was then given. In an instant every musket and cross-bow was levelled at the unfortunate Cholulans in the courtyard, and a frightful volley poured into them as they stood crowded together like a

herd of deer in the centre. They were taken by surprise, for they had not heard the preceding dialogue with the chiefs. They made scarcely any resistance to the Spaniards, who followed up the discharge of their pieces by rushing on them with their swords; and, as the half-naked bodies of the natives afforded no protection, they hewed them down with as much ease as the reaper mows down the ripe corn in harvest-time. Some endeavored to scale the walls, but only afforded a surer mark to the arquebusiers and archers. Others threw themselves into the gateways, but were received on the long pikes of the soldiers who guarded them. Some few had better luck in hiding themselves under the heaps of slain with which the ground was soon loaded.

While this work of death was going on, the countrymen of the slaughtered Indians, drawn together by the noise of the massacre, had commenced a furious assault on the Spaniards from without. But Cortés had placed his battery of heavy guns in a position that commanded the avenues, and swept off the files of the assailants as they rushed on. In the intervals between the discharges, which, in the imperfect state of the science in that day, were much longer than in ours, he forced back the press by charging with the horse into the midst. The steeds, the guns, the weapons of the Spaniards were all new to the Cholulans. Notwithstanding the novelty of the terrific spectacle, the flash of fire-arms mingling with the deafening roar of the artillery as its thunders reverberated among the buildings, the despairing

Indians pushed on to take the places of their fallen comrades.

While this fierce struggle was going forward, the Tlascalans, hearing the concerted signal, had advanced with quick pace into the city. They had bound, by order of Cortés, wreaths of sedge round their heads, that they might the more surely be distinguished from the Cholulans.[1] Coming up in the very heat of the engagement, they fell on the defenceless rear of the townsmen, who, trampled down under the heels of the Castilian cavalry on one side, and galled by their vindictive enemies on the other, could no longer maintain their ground. They gave way, some taking refuge in the nearest buildings, which, being partly of wood, were speedily set on fire. Others fled to the temples. One strong party, with a number of priests at its head, got possession of the great *teocalli*. There was a vulgar tradition, already alluded to, that on removal of part of the walls the god would send forth an inundation to overwhelm his enemies. The superstitious Cholulans with great difficulty succeeded in wrenching away some of the stones in the walls of the edifice. But dust, not water, followed. Their false god deserted them in the hour of need. In despair they flung themselves into the wooden turrets that crowned the temple, and poured down stones, javelins, and burning

[1] "Usáron los de Tlaxcalla de un aviso muy bueno y les dió Hernando Cortés porque fueran conocidos y no morir entre los enemigos por yerro, porque sus armas y divisas eran casi de una manera; . . . y ansí se pusiéron en las cabezas unas guirnaldas de esparto á manera de torzales, y con esto eran conocidos los de nuestra parcialidad que no fué pequeño aviso." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

arrows on the Spaniards, as they climbed the great staircase which, by a flight of one hundred and twenty steps, scaled the face of the pyramid. But the fiery shower fell harmless on the steel bonnets of the Christians, while they availed themselves of the burning shafts to set fire to the wooden citadel, which was speedily wrapt in flames. Still the garrison held out, and though quarter, *it is said,* was offered, only one Cholulan availed himself of it. The rest threw themselves headlong from the parapet, or perished miserably in the flames.[2]

All was now confusion and uproar in the fair city which had so lately reposed in security and peace. The groans of the dying, the frantic supplications of the vanquished for mercy, were mingled with the loud battle-cries of the Spaniards as they rode down their enemy, and with the shrill whistle of the Tlascalans, who gave full scope to the long-cherished rancor of ancient rivalry. The tumult was still further swelled by the incessant rattle of musketry, and the crash of falling timbers, which sent up a volume of flame that outshone the ruddy light of morning, making altogether a hideous confusion of sights and sounds that converted the Holy City into a Pandemonium. As resistance slackened, the victors broke into the houses and sacred places, plundering them of whatever valuables they contained, plate, jewels, which were found in some quantity, wearing-apparel and

[2] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4, 15.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 40.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60.

provisions, the two last coveted even more than the former by the simple Tlascalans, thus facilitating a division of the spoil much to the satisfaction of their Christian confederates. Amidst this universal license, it is worthy of remark, the commands of Cortés were so far respected that no violence was offered to women or children, though these, as well as numbers of the men, were made prisoners to be swept into slavery by the Tlascalans.[3] These scenes of violence had lasted some hours, when Cortés, moved by the entreaties of some Cholulan chiefs who had been reserved from the massacre, backed by the prayers of the Mexican envoys, consented out of regard, as he said, to the latter, the representatives of Montezuma, to call off the soldiers, and put a stop, as well as he could, to further outrage.* Two of the caciques were, also, permitted to go to their countrymen with assurances of pardon and protection to all who would return to their obedience.

These measures had their effect. By the joint efforts of Cortés and the caciques, the tumult was with much difficulty appeased. The assailants, Spaniards and Indians, gathered under their re-

[3] "They killed nearly six thousand persons, but touched neither women nor children, for so it had been ordered." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.

* [Andrés de Tápia, who participated in the massacre, says that the work of destroying the city ("el trabajar por destruir la cibdad") went on for two days, before Cortés gave orders for it to cease, and that it was not till two or three days later that the inhabitants, many of whom had fled to the mountains and neighboring territory, obtained pardon and leave to return. Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, publicada por Joaquin García Icazbalceta, tom. ii.—K.]

spective banners, and the Cholulans, relying on the assurance of their chiefs, gradually returned to their homes.

The first act of Cortés was to prevail on the Tlascalan chiefs to liberate their captives.[4] Such was their deference to the Spanish commander that they acquiesced, though not without murmurs, contenting themselves, as best they could, with the rich spoil rifled from the Cholulans, consisting of various luxuries long since unknown in Tlascala. His next care was to cleanse the city from its loathsome impurities, particularly from the dead bodies which lay festering in heaps in the streets and great square. The general, in his letter to Charles the Fifth, admits three thousand slain, most accounts say six, and some swell the amount yet higher. As the eldest and principal cacique was among the number, Cortés assisted the Cholulans in installing a successor in his place.[5] By these pacific measures confidence was gradually restored. The people in the environs, reassured, flocked into the capital to supply the place of the diminished population. The markets were again opened; and the usual avocations of an orderly, industrious community were resumed. Still, the long piles of black and smouldering ruins proclaimed the hurricane which had so lately swept over the city, and the walls surrounding the scene

[4] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.

[5] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—The descendants of the principal Cholulan cacique are living at this day in Puebla, according to Bustamante. See Gomara, Crónica, trad. de Chimalpain (México, 1826), tom. i. p. 98, nota.

of slaughter in the great square, which were standing more than fifty years after the event, told the sad tale of the Massacre of Cholula.[6]

This passage in their history is one of those that have left a dark stain on the memory of the Conquerors. Nor can we contemplate at this day, without a shudder, the condition of this fair and flourishing capital thus invaded in its privacy and delivered over to the excesses of a rude and ruth-

[6] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 66.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4, 45.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Las Casas, in his printed treatise on the Destruction of the Indies, garnishes his account of these transactions with some additional and rather startling particulars. According to him, Cortés caused a hundred or more of the caciques to be impaled or roasted at the stake! He adds the report that, while the massacre in the court-yard was going on, the Spanish general repeated a scrap of an old *romance,* describing Nero as rejoicing over the burning ruins of Rome:

> "Mira Nero de Tarpeya,
> A Roma como se ardia.
> Gritos dan ninos y viejos,
> Y él de nada se dolia."
> (Brevísima Relacion, p. 46.)

This is the first instance, I suspect, on record of any person being ambitious of finding a parallel for himself in that emperor! Bernal Diaz, who had seen "the interminable narrative," as he calls it, of Las Casas, treats it with great contempt. His own version—one of those chiefly followed in the text—was corroborated by the report of the missionaries, who after the Conquest, visited Cholula, and investigated the affair with the aid of the priests and several old survivors who had witnessed it. It is confirmed in its substantial details by the other contemporary accounts. The excellent Bishop of Chiapa wrote with the avowed object of moving the sympathies of his countrymen in behalf of the oppressed natives; a generous object, certainly, but one that has too often warped his judgment from the strict line of historic impartiality. He was not an eye-witness of the transactions in New Spain, and was much too willing to receive whatever would make for his case, and to "over-red," if I may so say, his argument with such details of blood and slaughter as, from their very extravagance, carry their own refutation with them.

less soldiery. But, to judge the action fairly, we must transport ourselves to the age when it happened. The difficulty that meets us in the outset is, to find a justification of the right of conquest, at all. But it should be remembered that religious infidelity, at this period, and till a much later, was regarded—no matter whether founded on ignorance or education, whether hereditary or acquired, heretical or pagan—as a sin to be punished with fire and fagot in this world, and eternal suffering in the next. This doctrine, monstrous as it is, was the creed of the Romish, in other words, of the Christian Church,—the basis of the Inquisition, and of those other species of religious persecutions which have stained the annals, at some time or other, of nearly every nation in Christendom.[7] Under this code, the territory of the heathen, wherever found, was regarded as a sort of religious

[7] For an illustration of the above remark the reader is referred to the closing pages of chap. 7, Part II., of the "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," where I have taken some pains to show how deep-settled were these convictions in Spain at the period with which we are now occupied. The world has gained little in liberality since the age of Dante, who could coolly dispose of the great and good of antiquity in one of the circles of Hell because—no fault of theirs, certainly—they had come into the world too soon. The memorable verses, like many others of the immortal bard, are a proof at once of the strength and weakness of the human understanding. They may be cited as a fair exponent of the popular feeling at the beginning of the sixteenth century:

"Ch' ei non peccaro, e, s'egli hanno mercedi,
Non basta, perchè *non ebber battesmo*,
Ch' è parte della fede che tu credi.
E, se furon dinanzi al Cristianesmo,
Non adorar debitamente Dio;
E di questi cotai son io medesmo
Per tai difetti, e non per altro rio,
Semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
Che sanza speme vivemo in disio."

INFERNO, canto 4.

waif, which, in default of a legal proprietor, was claimed and taken possession of by the Holy See, and as such was freely given away by the head of the Church, to any temporal potentate whom he pleased, that would assume the burden of conquest.[8] Thus, Alexander the Sixth generously granted a large portion of the Western hemisphere to the Spaniards, and of the Eastern to the Portuguese. These lofty pretensions of the successors of the humble fisherman of Galilee, far from being nominal, were acknowledged and appealed to as conclusive in controversies between nations.[9]

With the right of conquest, thus conferred, came also the obligation, on which it may be said to have been founded, to retrieve the nations sitting in darkness from eternal perdition. This obligation was acknowledged by the best and the bravest, the gownsman in his closet, the missionary, and the warrior in the crusade. However much it may

[8] It is in the same spirit that the laws of Oleron, the maritime code of so high authority in the Middle Ages, abandon the property of the infidel, in common with that of pirates, as fair spoil to the true believer! "S'ilz sont pyrates, pilleurs, ou escumeurs de mer, ou Turcs, *et autres contraires et ennemis de nostredicte foy catholicque,* chascun peut prendre sur telles manieres de gens, *comme sur chiens, si peut l'on les desrobber et spoiler de leurs biens sans pugnition.* C'est le jugement." Jugemens d'Oleron, Art. 45, ap. Collection de Lois maritimes, par J. M. Pardessus (ed. Paris, 1828), tom. i. p. 351.

[9] The famous bull of partition became the basis of the treaty of Tordesillas, by which the Castilian and Portuguese governments determined the boundary line of their respective discoveries; a line that secured the vast empire of Brazil to the latter, which from priority of occupation should have belonged to their rivals. See the "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," Part I. chap. 18; Part II. chap. 9,—the closing pages of each.

have been debased by temporal motives and mixed up with worldly considerations of ambition and avarice, it was still active in the mind of the Christian conqueror. We have seen how far paramount it was to every calculation of personal interest in the breast of Cortés. The concession of the Pope, then, founded on, and enforcing, the imperative duty of conversion,[10] was the assumed basis—and, in the apprehension of that age, a sound one—of the right of conquest.[11]

[10] It is the condition, unequivocally expressed and reiterated, on which Alexander VI., in his famous bulls of May 3d and 4th, 1493, conveys to Ferdinand and Isabella full and absolute right over all such territories in the Western World as may not have been previously occupied by Christian princes. See these precious documents *in extenso,* apud Navarrete, Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos (Madrid, 1825), tom. ii. Nos. 17, 18.

[11] The ground on which Protestant nations assert a natural right to the fruits of their discoveries in the New World is very different. They consider that the earth was intended for cultivation, and that Providence never designed that hordes of wandering savages should hold a territory far more than necessary for their own maintenance, to the exclusion of civilized man. Yet it may be thought, as far as improvement of the soil is concerned, that this argument would afford us but an indifferent tenure for much of our own unoccupied and uncultivated territory, far exceeding what is demanded for our present or prospective support. As to a right founded on difference of civilization, this is obviously a still more uncertain criterion. It is to the credit of our Puritan ancestors that they did not avail themselves of any such interpretation of the law of nature, and still less relied on the powers conceded by King James's patent, asserting rights as absolute, nearly, as those claimed by the Roman See. On the contrary, they established their title to the soil by fair purchase of the aborigines; thus forming an honorable contrast to the policy pursued by too many of the settlers on the American continents. It should be remarked that, whatever difference of opinion may have subsisted between the Roman Catholic—or rather the Spanish and Portuguese —nations and the rest of Europe, in regard to the true foundation of their titles in a moral view, they have always been content, in their controversies with one another, to rest them exclusively on priority of discovery. For a brief view of the discussion, see Vattel (Droit des Gens, sec. 209), and especially Kent (Commentaries on American

This right could not, indeed, be construed to authorize any unnecessary act of violence to the natives. The present expedition, up to the period of its history at which we are now arrived, had probably been stained with fewer of such acts than almost any similar enterprise of the Spanish discoverers in the New World. Throughout the campaigns, Cortés had prohibited all wanton injuries to the natives in person or property, and had punished the perpetrators of them with exemplary severity. He had been faithful to his friends, and, with perhaps a single exception, not unmerciful to his foes. Whether from policy or principle, it should be recorded to his credit; though, like every sagacious mind, he may have felt that principle and policy go together.

He had entered Cholula as a friend, at the invitation of the Indian emperor, who had a real, if not avowed, control over the state. He had been received as a friend, with every demonstration of good will; when, without any offence of his own or his followers, he found they were to be the victims of an insidious plot,—that they were standing on a mine which might be sprung at any moment and bury them all in its ruins. His safety, as he

Law, vol. iii. lec. 51), where it is handled with much perspicuity and eloquence. The argument, as founded on the law of nations, may be found in the celebrated case of Johnson *v.* McIntosh. (Wheaton, Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of the United States, vol. iii. p. 543, et seq.) If it were not treating a grave discussion too lightly, I should crave leave to refer the reader to the renowned Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York (book 1, chap. 5) for a luminous disquisition on this knotty question. At all events, he will find there the popular arguments subjected to the test of ridicule; a test showing, more than any reasoning can, how much, or rather how little, they are really worth.

truly considered, left no alternative but to anticipate the blow of his enemies. Yet who can doubt that the punishment thus inflicted was excessive,—that the same end might have been attained by directing the blow against the guilty chiefs, instead of letting it fall on the ignorant rabble who but obeyed the commands of their masters? But when was it ever seen that fear, armed with power, was scrupulous in the exercise of it? or that the passions of a fierce soldiery, inflamed by conscious injuries, could be regulated in the moment of explosion?

We shall, perhaps, pronounce more impartially on the conduct of the Conquerors if we compare it with that of our own contemporaries under somewhat similar circumstances. The atrocities at Cholula were not so bad as those inflicted on the descendants of these very Spaniards, in the late war of the Peninsula, by the most polished nations of our time; by the British at Badajoz, for example,—at Tarragona, and a hundred other places, by the French. The wanton butchery, the ruin of property, and, above all, those outrages worse than death, from which the female part of the population were protected at Cholula, show a catalogue of enormities quite as black as those imputed to the Spaniards, and without the same apology for resentment,—with no apology, indeed, but that afforded by a brave and patriotic resistance. The consideration of these events, which, from their familiarity, make little impression on our senses, should render us more lenient in our judgments of the past, showing, as they do, that man in a state of excitement, savage or civilized, is much the same

in every age. It may teach us—it is one of the best lessons of history—that, since such are the *inevitable* evils of war, even among the most polished people, those who hold the destinies of nations in their hands, whether rulers or legislators, should submit to every sacrifice, save that of honor, before authorizing an appeal to arms. The extreme solicitude to avoid these calamities, by the aid of peaceful congresses and impartial mediation, is, on the whole, the strongest evidence, stronger than that afforded by the progress of science and art, of our boasted advance in civilization.

It is far from my intention to vindicate the cruel deeds of the old Conquerors. Let them lie heavy on their heads. They were an iron race, who perilled life and fortune in the cause; and, as they made little account of danger and suffering for themselves, they had little sympathy to spare for their unfortunate enemies. But, to judge them fairly, we must not do it by the lights of our own age. We must carry ourselves back to theirs, and take the point of view afforded by the civilization of their time. Thus only can we arrive at impartial criticism in reviewing the generations that are past. We must extend to them the same justice which we shall have occasion to ask from posterity, when, by the light of a higher civilization, it surveys the dark or doubtful passages in our own history, which hardly arrest the eye of the contemporary.*

* [The "massacre" at Cholula *was* a military necessity to one warring as Cortés was. Having discovered the existence of a plot to exterminate his forces, he simply struck first. The Cholulans had

But, whatever be thought of this transaction in a moral view, as a stroke of policy it was unques-

taken measures to annihilate the invaders, which must have proved successful against ordinary foes. Not only the Spanish historians but the native chroniclers testify to this fact. The Mexican story is told in the Indian paintings still preserved at San Juan Cuauhtlautzinco. The Cholulans did not regard the Spaniards as gods. They went to work to trap them and starve them like ordinary human beings. They cut off their supplies. They shut them up in the great Teepan. The Tlascalans knew all the while that treachery was planned. They knew also (what the Spaniards did not know, because of their ignorance of Indian governmental institutions) that any oaths the Cholulan chiefs might take would be binding upon the tribe only if the tribe had commissioned its representatives to take them. The embassy was only a decoy. The Spaniards thought that the perfuming with incense indicated submission to themselves. They did not know that prisoners of war, destined for sacrifice, were perfumed in the same way. But the slaughter could not have been by any means as great as is ordinarily supposed. In the first place, there were not as many inhabitants in the city as Cortés imagined; and, in the second place, three of the wards of the city were not involved either in the plot or the killing. The great crowd which attended the Spaniards as they passed through the streets was always the same crowd. It made a prodigious noise, and the invaders naturally imagined it to betoken an immense population. But Bandelier's estimate of 30,000 inhabitants is probably correct. Cortés, in his first report, writes, with apparent complacency, that "3000 muriéron en dos horas." This would imply a most astounding killing capacity on the part of the less than 500 Spaniards and their allies. The fire-arms of course made awful havoc, yet we must remember that it was a matter of time to load and fire the muskets and cannons of that age. No women and children were killed, not only because the soldiers were ordered to spare all women and children, but also because all non-combatants had been sent away some time before. Armed men fought and killed armed men. Moreover, the Tlascalan allies were more eager to plunder and to capture prisoners than to kill. Bandelier, recalling the fact that the battle was fought on a space not a quarter of a mile in length, questions whether more than five hundred men fell. His estimate is probably too small. The killing was stopped by Cortés five hours after the first shot was fired. Andrés de Tápia, who wrote some time after the affair, says the pillaging, etc., went on for two days. Bernal Diaz, writing fifty years afterward, says it ended the second day. But Cortés, writing the next year, says the place was full of women and children the next day. The "smoking ruins" must be dismissed as a creation of the imagination. Adobe and stone walls,

tionable. The nations of Anahuac had beheld, with admiration mingled with awe, the little band of Christian warriors steadily advancing along the plateau in face of every obstacle, overturning army after army with as much ease, apparently, as the good ship throws off the angry billows from her bows, or rather like the lava, which, rolling from their own volcanoes, holds on its course unchecked by obstacles, rock, tree, or building, bearing them along, or crushing and consuming them in its fiery path. The prowess of the Spaniards —"the white gods," as they were often called [12]— made them to be thought invincible. But it was not till their arrival at Cholula that the natives learned how terrible was their vengeance; and they trembled!

None trembled more than the Aztec emperor on his throne among the mountains. He read in these events the dark characters traced by the finger of Destiny.[13] He felt his empire melting away like

[12] *Los Dioses blancos.*—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 40.

[13] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—In an old Aztec harangue, made as a matter of form on the accession of a prince, we find the following remarkable prediction: "Perhaps ye are dismayed at the prospect of the terrible calamities that are one day to overwhelm us, calamities foreseen and foretold, though not felt, by our fathers! . . . when the destruction and desolation of the empire shall come, when all shall be plunged in darkness, when the

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and roof timbers covered with a thick coating of earth, do not afford good material for a conflagration. The 20,000 warriors from Mexico mentioned on p. 194 could not have been present. It would have been impossible for so large a body to have been sent from that city, and Cortés would have learned of its approach, through his Tlascalan allies, long before. Bandelier treats the massacre very lucidly in his "Gilded Man," pp. 258–282.—M.]

a morning mist. He might well feel so. Some of the most important cities in the neighborhood of Cholula, intimidated by the fate of that capital, now sent their envoys to the Castilian camp, tendering their allegiance, and propitiating the favor of the strangers by rich presents of gold and slaves.[14] Montezuma, alarmed at these signs of defection, took counsel again of his impotent deities; but, although the altars smoked with fresh hecatombs of human victims, he obtained no cheering response. He determined, therefore, to send another embassy to the Spaniards, disavowing any participation in the conspiracy of Cholula.

Meanwhile Cortés was passing his time in that capital. He thought that the impression produced by the late scenes, and by the present restoration of tranquillity, offered a fair opportunity for the good work of conversion. He accordingly urged the citizens to embrace the Cross and abandon the false guardians who had abandoned them in their extremity. But the traditions of centuries rested on the Holy City, shedding a halo of glory around it as "the sanctuary of the gods," the religious capital of Anahuac. It was too much to expect that the people would willingly resign this preeminence and descend to the level of an ordinary community. Still Cortés might have pressed the matter, however unpalatable, but for the re-

hour shall arrive in which they shall make us slaves throughout the land, and we shall be condemned to the lowest and most degrading offices!" (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 16.) This random shot of prophecy, which I have rendered literally, shows how strong and settled was the apprehension of some impending revolution.

[14] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 3.

newed interposition of the wise Olmedo, who persuaded him to postpone it till after the reduction of the whole country.[15]

The Spanish general, however, had the satisfaction to break open the cages in which the victims for sacrifice were confined, and to dismiss the trembling inmates to liberty and life. He also seized upon the great *teocalli,* and devoted that portion of the building which, being of stone, had escaped the fury of the flames, to the purposes of a Christian church; while a crucifix of stone and lime, of gigantic dimensions, spreading out its arms above the city, proclaimed that the population below was under the protection of the Cross. On the same spot now stands a temple overshadowed by dark cypresses of unknown antiquity, and dedicated to Our Lady *de los Remedios.* An image of the Virgin presides over it, *said* to have been left by the Conqueror himself;[16] and an Indian ecclesiastic, a descendant of the ancient Cholulans, performs the peaceful services of the Roman Catholic communion on the spot where his ancestors celebrated the sanguinary rites of the mystic Quetzalcoatl.[17]

During the occurrence of these events, envoys arrived from Mexico. They were charged, as usual, with a rich present of plate and ornaments of gold, among others, artificial birds in imitation of turkeys, with plumes of the same precious metal. To these were added fifteen hundred cotton dresses of delicate fabric. The emperor even ex-

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.
[16] Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 13.
[17] Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 32.

pressed his regret at the catastrophe of Cholula, vindicated himself from any share in the conspiracy which he said had brought deserved retribution on the heads of its authors, and explained the existence of an Aztec force in the neighborhood by the necessity of repressing some disorders there.[18]

One cannot contemplate this pusillanimous conduct of Montezuma without mingled feelings of pity and contempt. It is not easy to reconcile his assumed innocence of the plot with many circumstances connected with it. But it must be remembered here, and always, that his history is to be collected solely from Spanish writers and such of the natives as flourished after the Conquest, when the country had become a colony of Spain. Not an Aztec record of the primitive age survives, in a form capable of interpretation.[19] It is the hard fate of this unfortunate monarch to be wholly in-

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 69.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 63.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.

[19] The language of the text may appear somewhat too unqualified, considering that three Aztec codices exist with interpretations. (See *ante*, vol. i. pp. 117–119.) But they contain very few and general allusions to Montezuma, and these strained through commentaries of Spanish monks, oftentimes manifestly irreconcilable with the genuine Aztec notions. Even such writers as Ixtlilxochitl and Camargo, from whom, considering their Indian descent, we might expect more independence, seem less solicitous to show this, than their loyalty to the new faith and country of their adoption. Perhaps the most honest Aztec record of the period is to be obtained from the volumes, the twelfth book particularly, of Father Sahagun, embodying the traditions of the natives soon after the Conquest. This portion of his great work was rewritten by its author, and considerable changes were made in it, at a later period of his life. Yet it may be doubted if the reformed version reflects the traditions of the country as faithfully as the original, which is still in manuscript, and which I have chiefly followed.

debted for his portraiture to the pencil of his enemies.

More than a fortnight had elapsed since the entrance of the Spaniards into Cholula, and Cortés now resolved without loss of time to resume his march towards the capital. His rigorous reprisals had so far intimidated the Cholulans that he felt assured he should no longer leave an active enemy in his rear, to annoy him in case of retreat. He had the satisfaction, before his departure, to heal the feud—in outward appearance, at least—that had so long subsisted between the Holy City and Tlascala, and which, under the revolution which so soon changed the destinies of the country, never revived.

It was with some disquietude that he now received an application from his Cempoallan allies to be allowed to withdraw from the expedition and return to their own homes. They had incurred too deeply the resentment of the Aztec emperor, by their insults to his collectors, and by their co-operation with the Spaniards, to care to trust themselves in his capital. It was in vain Cortés endeavored to reassure them by promises of his protection. Their habitual distrust and dread of " the great Montezuma " were not to be overcome. The general learned their determination with regret, for they had been of infinite service to the cause by their stanch fidelity and courage. All this made it the more difficult for him to resist their reasonable demand. Liberally recompensing their services, therefore, from the rich wardrobe and treasures of the emperor, he took leave of his faithful

followers, before his own departure from Cholula. He availed himself of their return to send letters to Juan de Escalante, his lieutenant at Vera Cruz, acquainting him with the successful progress of the expedition. He enjoined on that officer to strengthen the fortifications of the place, so as the better to resist any hostile interference from Cuba, —an event for which Cortés was ever on the watch, —and to keep down revolt among the natives. He especially commended the Totonacs to his protection, as allies whose fidelity to the Spaniards exposed them, in no slight degree, to the vengeance of the Aztecs.[20]

[20] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 84, 85.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

CHAPTER VIII

MARCH RESUMED—ASCENT OF THE GREAT VOLCANO—VALLEY OF MEXICO—IMPRESSION ON THE SPANIARDS—CONDUCT OF MONTEZUMA—THEY DESCEND INTO THE VALLEY

1519

EVERYTHING being now restored to quiet in Cholula, the allied army of Spaniards and Tlascalans set forward in high spirits, and resumed the march on Mexico. The road lay through the beautiful savannas and luxuriant plantations that spread out for several leagues in every direction. On the march, they were met occasionally by embassies from the neighboring places, anxious to claim the protection of the white men, and to propitiate them by gifts, especially of gold, their appetite for which was generally known throughout the country.

Some of these places were allies of the Tlascalans, and all showed much discontent with the oppressive rule of Montezuma. The natives cautioned the Spaniards against putting themselves in his power by entering his capital; and they stated, as evidence of his hostile disposition, that he had caused the direct road to it to be blocked up, that

the strangers might be compelled to choose another, which, from its narrow passes and strong positions, would enable him to take them at great disadvantage.

The information was not lost on Cortés, who kept a strict eye on the movements of the Mexican envoys, and redoubled his own precautions against surprise.[1] Cheerful and active, he was ever where his presence was needed, sometimes in the van, at others in the rear, encouraging the weak, stimulating the sluggish, and striving to kindle in the breasts of others the same courageous spirit which glowed in his own. At night he never omitted to go the rounds, to see that every man was at his post. On one occasion his vigilance had wellnigh proved fatal to him. He approached so near a sentinel that the man, unable to distinguish his person in the dark, levelled his cross-bow at him, when fortunately an exclamation of the general, who gave the watchword of the night, arrested a movement which might else have brought the campaign to a close and given a respite for some time longer to the empire of Montezuma.

The army came at length to the place mentioned by the friendly Indians, where the road forked, and one arm of it was found, as they had foretold, obstructed with large trunks of trees, and huge stones which had been strewn across it. Cortés inquired the meaning of this from the Mexican ambassadors. They said it was done by the em-

[1] "We walked," says Diaz, in the homely but expressive Spanish proverb, "with our beards over our shoulders"—*la barba sobre el ombro.* Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 86.

peror's orders, to prevent their taking a route which, after some distance, they would find nearly impracticable for the cavalry. They acknowledged, however, that it was the most direct road; and Cortés, declaring that this was enough to decide him in favor of it, as the Spaniards made no account of obstacles, commanded the rubbish to be cleared away. Some of the timber might still be seen by the roadside, as Bernal Diaz tells us, many years after. The event left little doubt in the general's mind of the meditated treachery of the Mexicans. But he was too politic to betray his suspicions.[2]

They were now leaving the pleasant champaign country, as the road wound up the bold sierra which separates the great plateaus of Mexico and Puebla. The air, as they ascended, became keen and piercing; and the blasts, sweeping down the frozen sides of the mountains, made the soldiers shiver in their thick harness of cotton, and benumbed the limbs of both men and horses.

They were passing between two of the highest mountains on the North American continent; Popocatepetl, "the hill that smokes," and Iztaccihuatl, or "white woman,"[3]—a name suggested, doubtless, by the bright robe of snow spread over its broad and broken surface. A puerile superstition of the Indians regarded these celebrated mountains as gods, and Iztaccihuatl as the wife of

[2] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 86.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 70.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 41.

[3] "Llamaban al volcan Popocatépetl, y á la sierra nevada Iztaccihuatl, que quiere decir la sierra que humea, y la blanca muger." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

her more formidable neighbor.[4] A tradition of a higher character described the northern volcano as the abode of the departed spirits of wicked rulers, whose fiery agonies in their prison-house caused the fearful bellowings and convulsions in times of eruption. It was the classic fable of antiquity.[5] These superstitious legends had invested the mountain with a mysterious horror, that made the natives shrink from attempting its ascent, which, indeed, was from natural causes a work of incredible difficulty.

The great *volcan*,[6] as Popocatepetl was called, rose to the enormous height of 17,852 feet above the level of the sea; more than 2000 feet above the "monarch of mountains,"—the highest elevation in Europe.[7] During the present century it has rarely given evidence of its volcanic origin, and "the hill that smokes" has almost forfeited its claim to the appellation. But at the time of the Conquest it was frequently in a state of activity,

[4] "La Sierra nevada y el volcan los tenian por Dioses; y que el volcan y la Sierra nevada eran marido y muger." Ibid., MS.

[5] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 62.

> "Ætna Giganteos nunquam tacitura triumphos,
> Enceladi bustum, qui saucia terga revinetus
> Spirat inexhaustum flagranti pectore sulphur."
>
> CLAUDIAN, De Rapt. Pros., lib. 1, v. 152.

[6] The old Spanish called any lofty mountain by that name, though never having given signs of combustion. Thus, Chimborazo was called a *volcan de nieve*, or "snow volcano" (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 162); and that enterprising traveller, Stephens, notices the *volcan de agua*, "water volcano," in the neighborhood of Antigua Guatemala. Incidents of Travel in Chiapas, Central America, and Yucatan (New York, 1841), vol. i. chap. 13.

[7] Mont Blanc, according to M. de Saussure, is 15,670 feet high. For the estimate of Popocatepetl, see an elaborate communication in the "Revista Mexicana," tom. ii. No. 4.

and raged with uncommon fury while the Spaniards were at Tlascala; an evil omen, it was thought, for the natives of Anahuac. Its head, gathered into a regular cone by the deposit of successive eruptions, wore the usual form of volcanic mountains when not disturbed by the falling in of the crater. Soaring towards the skies, with its silver sheet of everlasting snow, it was seen far and wide over the broad plains of Mexico and Puebla, the first object which the morning sun greeted in his rising, the last where his evening rays were seen to linger, shedding a glorious effulgence over its head, that contrasted strikingly with the ruinous waste of sand and lava immediately below, and the deep fringe of funereal pines that shrouded its base.

The mysterious terrors which hung over the spot, and the wild love of adventure, made some of the Spanish cavaliers desirous to attempt the ascent, which the natives declared no man could accomplish and live. Cortés encouraged them in the enterprise, willing to show the Indians that no achievement was above the dauntless daring of his followers. One of his captains, accordingly, Diego Ordaz, with nine Spaniards, and several Tlascalans, encouraged by their example, undertook the ascent. It was attended with more difficulty than had been anticipated.

The lower region was clothed with a dense forest, so thickly matted that in some places it was scarcely possible to penetrate it. It grew thinner, however, as they advanced, dwindling by degrees into a straggling, stunted vegetation, till, at the

height of somewhat more than thirteen thousand feet, it faded away altogether. The Indians who had held on thus far, intimidated by the strange subterraneous sounds of the volcano, even then in a state of combustion, now left them. The track opened on a black surface of glazed volcanic sand and of lava, the broken fragments of which, arrested in its boiling progress in a thousand fantastic forms, opposed continual impediments to their advance. Amidst these, one huge rock, the *Pico del Fraile,* a conspicuous object from below, rose to the perpendicular height of a hundred and fifty feet, compelling them to take a wide circuit. They soon came to the limits of perpetual snow, where new difficulties presented themselves, as the treacherous ice gave an imperfect footing, and a false step might precipitate them into the frozen chasms that yawned around. To increase their distress, respiration in these aerial regions became so difficult that every effort was attended with sharp pains in the head and limbs. Still they pressed on, till, drawing nearer the crater, such volumes of smoke, sparks, and cinders were belched forth from its burning entrails, and driven down the sides of the mountain, as nearly suffocated and blinded them. It was too much even for their hardy frames to endure, and, however reluctantly, they were compelled to abandon the attempt on the eve of its completion. They brought back some huge icicles,—a curious sight in these tropical regions,—as a trophy of their achievement, which, however imperfect, was sufficient to strike the minds of the natives with wonder, by showing that with the

Spaniards the most appalling and mysterious perils were only as pastimes. The undertaking was eminently characteristic of the bold spirit of the cavalier of that day, who, not content with the dangers that lay in his path, seemed to court them from the mere Quixotic love of adventure. A report of the affair was transmitted to the emperor Charles the Fifth, and the family of Ordaz was allowed to commemorate the exploit by assuming a burning mountain on their escutcheon.[8]

The general was not satisfied with the result. Two years after, he sent up another party, under Francisco Montaño, a cavalier of determined resolution. The object was to obtain sulphur to assist in making gunpowder for the army. The mountain was quiet at this time, and the expedition was attended with better success. The Spaniards, five in number, climbed to the very edge of the crater, which presented an irregular ellipse at its mouth, more than a league in circumference. Its depth might be from eight hundred to a thousand feet. A lurid flame burned gloomily at the bottom, sending up a sulphurous steam, which, cooling as it rose, was precipitated on the sides of the cavity. The party cast lots, and it fell on Montaño himself, to descend in a basket into this hideous abyss, into which he was lowered by his companions to the

[8] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 70.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 78.—The latter writer speaks of the ascent as made when the army lay at Tlascala, and of the attempt as perfectly successful. The general's letter, written soon after the event, with no motive for misstatement, is the better authority. See, also, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 308.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 62.

depth of four hundred feet! This was repeated several times, till the adventurous cavalier had collected a sufficient quantity of sulphur for the wants of the army.[9] This doughty enterprise excited general admiration at the time. Cortés concludes his report of it to the emperor with the judicious reflection that it would be less inconvenient, on the whole, to import their powder from Spain.[10]

But it is time to return from our digression, which may perhaps be excused, as illustrating, in a remarkable manner, the chimerical spirit of enterprise—not inferior to that in his own romances of chivalry—which glowed in the breast of the Spanish cavalier in the sixteenth century.

The army held on its march through the intricate gorges of the sierra. The route was nearly the

[9] [Montaño's family remained in Mexico after the Conquest, and his daughter received a pension from the government. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. apénd. 2.]

[10] Rel. Ter. y Quarta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 318, 380.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 3, cap. 1.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 41.—M. de Humboldt doubts the fact of Montaño's descent into the crater, thinking it more probable that he obtained the sulphur through some lateral crevice in the mountain. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 164.) * No attempt—at least, no successful one—was made to gain the summit of Popocatepetl, since this of Montaño, till the present century. In 1827 it was reached in two expeditions, and again in 1833 and 1834. A very full account of the last, containing many interesting details and scientific observations, was written by Federico de Gerolt, one of the party, and published in the periodical already referred to. (Revista Mexicana, tom. i. pp. 461–482.) The party from the topmost peak, which commanded a full view of the less elevated Iztaccihuatl, saw no vestige of a crater in that mountain, contrary to the opinion usually received.

* [There would seem to have been no grounds for the doubt expressed by Humboldt, as the sulphur is now nearly exhausted, having been regularly collected by Indian laborers, lowered into the crater by means of a rope of hide attached to a windlass. Tylor, Anahuac, p. 269.—K.]

same as that pursued at the present day by the courier from the capital to Puebla, by the way of Mecameca.[11] It was not that usually taken by travellers from Vera Cruz, who follow the more circuitous road round the northern base of Iztaccihuatl, as less fatiguing than the other, though inferior in picturesque scenery and romantic points of view. The icy winds, that now swept down the sides of the mountains, brought with them a tempest of arrowy sleet and snow, from which the Christians suffered even more than the Tlascalans, reared from infancy among the wild solitudes of their own native hills. As night came on, their sufferings would have been intolerable, but they luckily found a shelter in the commodious stone buildings which the Mexican government had placed at stated intervals along the roads for the accommodation of the traveller and their own couriers. It little dreamed it was providing a protection for its enemies.

The troops, refreshed by a night's rest, succeeded, early on the following day, in gaining the crest of the sierra of Ahualco, which stretches like a curtain between the two great mountains on the north and south. Their progress was now comparatively easy, and they marched forward with a buoyant step, as they felt they were treading the soil of Montezuma.

They had not advanced far, when, turning an angle of the sierra, they suddenly came on a view which more than compensated the toils of the preceding day. It was that of the Valley of Mexico,

[11] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iv. p. 17.

or Tenochtitlan, as more commonly called by the natives; which, with its picturesque assemblage of water, woodland, and cultivated plains, its shining cities and shadowy hills, was spread out like some gay and gorgeous panorama before them. In the highly rarefied atmosphere of these upper regions, even remote objects have a brilliancy of coloring and a distinctness of outline which seem to annihilate distance.[12] Stretching far away at their feet, were seen noble forests of oak, sycamore, and cedar, and beyond, yellow fields of maize and the towering maguey, intermingled with orchards and blooming gardens; for flowers, in such demand for their religious festivals, were even more abundant in this populous valley than in other parts of Anahuac. In the centre of the great basin were beheld the lakes, occupying then a much larger portion of its surface than at present; their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets, and, in the midst, —like some Indian empress with her coronal of pearls,—the fair city of Mexico, with her white towers and pyramidal temples, reposing, as it were, on the bosom of the waters,—the far-famed "Venice of the Aztecs." High over all rose the royal hill of Chapoltepec, the residence of the Mexican monarchs, crowned with the same grove of gigantic cypresses which at this day fling their broad shadows over the land. In the distance beyond the blue waters of the lake, and nearly screened by intervening foliage, was seen a shining speck, the

[12] The lake of Tezcuco, on which stood the capital of Mexico, is 2277 metres—nearly 7500 feet—above the sea. Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 45.

rival capital of Tezcuco, and, still farther on, the dark belt of porphyry, girdling the Valley around, like a rich setting which Nature had devised for the fairest of her jewels.

Such was the beautiful vision which broke on the eyes of the Conquerors. And even now, when so sad a change has come over the scene; when the stately forests have been laid low, and the soil, unsheltered from the fierce radiance of a tropical sun, is in many places abandoned to sterility; when the waters have retired, leaving a broad and ghastly margin white with the incrustation of salts, while the cities and hamlets on their borders have mouldered into ruins;—even now that desolation broods over the landscape, so indestructible are the lines of beauty which Nature has traced on its features, that no traveller, however cold, can gaze on them with any other emotions than those of astonishment and rapture.[13]

What, then, must have been the emotions of the Spaniards, when, after working their toilsome way into the upper air, the cloudy tabernacle parted

[13] It is unnecessary to refer to the pages of modern travellers, who, however they may differ in taste, talent, or feeling, all concur in the impressions produced on them by the sight of this beautiful valley.*

* [Modern civilization has, according to Bandelier, made Mexico much more beautiful than it was in the days of Montezuma. He says, "The city of Mexico, with its domes and spires glistening in the noonday sun, is certainly a finer sight than was the old pueblo, resting on the dull waters of the lagune, like an adobe patch, surmounted by the clumsy mounds of worship." He forgets, however, that the adobe was plastered over with gypsum, and that "the walls were so well whitened, polished, and shining that they appeared to the Spaniards when at a distance to have been silver." Clavigero, Mexico, ii. p. 232.—M.]

before their eyes, and they beheld these fair scenes in all their pristine magnificence and beauty! It was like the spectacle which greeted the eyes of Moses from the summit of Pisgah, and, in the warm glow of their feelings, they cried out, "It is the promised land!" [14]

But these feelings of admiration were soon followed by others of a very different complexion, as they saw in all this the evidences of a civilization and power far superior to anything they had yet encountered. The more timid, disheartened by the prospect, shrank from a contest so unequal, and demanded, as they had done on some former occasions, to be led back again to Vera Cruz. Such was not the effect produced on the sanguine spirit of the general. His avarice was sharpened by the display of the dazzling spoil at his feet; and, if he felt a natural anxiety at the formidable odds, his confidence was renewed, as he gazed on the lines of his veterans, whose weather-beaten visages and battered armor told of battles won and difficulties surmounted, while his bold barbarians, with appetites whetted by the view of their enemies' country, seemed like eagles on the mountains, ready to pounce upon their prey. By argument, entreaty, and menace, he endeavored to restore the faltering courage of the soldiers, urging them not to think of retreat, now that they had reached the goal for which they had panted, and the golden gates were

[14] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 41.—It may call to the reader's mind the memorable view of the fair plains of Italy which Hannibal displayed to his hungry barbarians after a similar march through the wild passes of the Alps, as reported by the prince of historic painters. Livy, Hist., lib. 21, cap. 35.

opened to receive them. In these efforts he was well seconded by the brave cavaliers, who held honor as dear to them as fortune; until the dullest spirits caught somewhat of the enthusiasm of their leaders, and the general had the satisfaction to see his hesitating columns, with their usual buoyant step, once more on their march down the slopes of the sierra.[15]

With every step of their progress, the woods became thinner; patches of cultivated land more frequent; and hamlets were seen in the green and sheltered nooks, the inhabitants of which, coming out to meet them, gave the troops a kind reception. Everywhere they heard complaints of Montezuma, especially of the unfeeling manner in which he carried off their young men to recruit his armies, and their maidens for his harem. These symptoms of discontent were noticed with satisfaction by Cortés, who saw that Montezuma's "mountain-throne," as it was called, was indeed seated on a volcano, with the elements of combustion so active within that it seemed as if any hour might witness an explosion. He encouraged the disaffected natives to rely on his protection, as he had come to redress their wrongs. He took advantage, moreover, of their favorable dispositions, to scatter among them such gleams of spiritual light as time and the preaching of Father Olmedo could afford.

He advanced by easy stages, somewhat retarded by the crowd of curious inhabitants gathered on

[15] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

the highways to see the strangers, and halting at every spot of interest or importance. On the road, he was met by another embassy from the capital. It consisted of several Aztec lords, freighted, as usual, with a rich largess of gold, and robes of delicate furs and feathers. The message of the emperor was couched in the same deprecatory terms as before. He even condescended to bribe the return of the Spaniards, by promising, in that event, four loads of gold to the general, and one to each of the captains,[16] with a yearly tribute to their sovereign. So effectually had the lofty and naturally courageous spirit of the barbarian monarch been subdued by the influence of superstition!

But the man whom the hostile array of armies could not daunt was not to be turned from his purpose by a woman's prayers. He received the embassy with his usual courtesy, declaring, as before, that he could not answer it to his own sovereign if he were now to return without visiting the emperor in his capital. It would be much easier to arrange matters by a personal interview than by distant negotiation. The Spaniards came in the spirit of peace. Montezuma would so find it; but, should their presence prove burdensome to him, it would be easy for them to relieve him of it.[17]

The Aztec monarch, meanwhile, was a prey to the most dismal apprehensions. It was intended

[16] A load for a Mexican *tamane* was about fifty pounds, or eight hundred ounces. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 69, nota.

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 12.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 73.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

that the embassy above noticed should reach the Spaniards before they crossed the mountains. When he learned that this was accomplished, and that the dread strangers were on their march across the Valley, the very threshold of his capital, the last spark of hope died away in his bosom. Like one who suddenly finds himself on the brink of some dark and yawning gulf, he was too much bewildered to be able to rally his thoughts, or even to comprehend his situation. He was the victim of an absolute destiny, against which no foresight or precautions could have availed. It was as if the strange beings who had thus invaded his shores had dropped from some distant planet, so different were they from all he had ever seen, in appearance and manners; so superior—though a mere handful in numbers—to the banded nations of Anahuac in strength and science and all the fearful accompaniments of war! They were now in the Valley. The huge mountain screen, which nature had so kindly drawn around it for its defence, had been overleaped. The golden visions of security and repose in which he had so long indulged, the lordly sway descended from his ancestors, his broad imperial domain, were all to pass away. It seemed like some terrible dream,—from which he was now, alas! to awake to a still more terrible reality.

In a paroxysm of despair, he shut himself up in his palace, refused food, and sought relief in prayer and in sacrifice. But the oracles were dumb. He then adopted the more sensible expedient of calling a council of his principal and oldest nobles. Here was the same division of opinion

which had before prevailed. Cacama, the young king of Tezcuco, his nephew, counselled him to receive the Spaniards courteously, as ambassadors, so styled by themselves, of a foreign prince. Cuitlahua, Montezuma's more warlike brother, urged him to muster his forces on the instant, and drive back the invaders from his capital or die in its defence. But the monarch found it difficult to rally his spirits for this final struggle. With downcast eye and dejected mien, he exclaimed, "Of what avail is resistance, when the gods have declared themselves against us?[18] Yet I mourn most for the old and infirm, the women and children, too feeble to fight or to fly. For myself and the brave men around me, we must bare our breasts to the storm, and meet it as we may!" Such are the sorrowful and sympathetic tones in which the Aztec emperor is said to have uttered the bitterness of his grief. He would have acted a more glorious part had he put his capital in a posture of defence, and prepared, like the last of the Palæologi, to bury himself under its ruins.[19]

He straightway prepared to send a last embassy to the Spaniards, with his nephew, the lord of Tezcuco, at its head, to welcome them to Mexico.

The Christian army, meanwhile, had advanced as far as Amaquemecan, a well-built town of several thousand inhabitants. They were kindly received by the cacique, lodged in large, commodious,

[18] This was not the sentiment of the Roman hero:

"Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni!"

Lucan, lib. 1, v. 128.

[19] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 13.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 44.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 63.

stone buildings, and at their departure presented, among other things, with gold to the amount of three thousand *castellanos*.[20] Having halted there a couple of days, they descended among flourishing plantations of maize and of maguey, the latter of which might be called the Aztec vineyards, towards the lake of Chalco. Their first resting-place was Ajotzinco, a town of considerable size, with a great part of it then standing on piles in the water. It was the first specimen which the Spaniards had seen of this maritime architecture. The canals which intersected the city, instead of streets, presented an animated scene, from the number of barks which glided up and down freighted with provisions and other articles for the inhabitants. The Spaniards were particularly struck with the style and commodious structure of the houses, built chiefly of stone, and with the general aspect of wealth and even elegance which prevailed there.

Though received with the greatest show of hospitality, Cortés found some occasion for distrust in the eagerness manifested by the people to see and approach the Spaniards.[21] Not content with gazing at them in the roads, some even made their way stealthily into their quarters, and fifteen or twenty unhappy Indians were shot down by the

[20] "El señor de esta provincia y pueblo me dió hasta quarenta esclavas, y tres mil castellanos; y dos dias que allí estuve nos proveyó muy cumplidamente de todo lo necesario para nuestra comida." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 74.

[21] "De todas partes era infinita la gente que de un cabo é de otro concurrian á mirar á los Españoles, é maravillábanse mucho de los ver. Tenian grande espacio é atencion en mirar los caballos; decian, 'Estos son Teules,' que quiere decir Demonios." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 45.

sentinels as spies. Yet there appears, as well as we can judge, at this distance of time, to have been no real ground for such suspicion. The undisguised jealousy of the court, and the cautions he had received from his allies, while they very properly put the general on his guard, seem to have given an unnatural acuteness, at least in the present instance, to his perceptions of danger.[22]

Early on the following morning, as the army was preparing to leave the place, a courier came, requesting the general to postpone his departure till after the arrival of the king of Tezcuco, who was advancing to meet him. It was not long before he appeared, borne in a palanquin or litter, richly decorated with plates of gold and precious stones, having pillars curiously wrought, supporting a canopy of green plumes, a favorite color with the Aztec princes. He was accompanied by a numerous suite of nobles and inferior attendants.

[22] Cortés tells the affair coolly enough to the emperor. "And that night I kept such guard that of the spies—as well those who came across the water in canoes as those who descended from the sierra to watch for an opportunity of accomplishing their design—fifteen or twenty were discovered in the morning that had been killed by our men; so that few returned with the information they had come to get." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 74.*

* [Cortés cannot be blamed for adopting such precautions as any good general would have thought it culpable to neglect; while his repeated warnings to the natives not to approach the camp after sunset show his anxiety to impress them with a sense of the danger. "Sabed," he said to the chiefs, "que estos que conmigo vienen no duermen de noche, é si duermen es un poco cuando es de dia; é de noche están con sus armas, é cualquiera que ven que anda en pié ó entra do ellos están, luego lo matan; é yo no basto á lo resistir; por tanto, haceldo así saber á toda vuestra gente, é decildes que despues de puesto el sol ninguna venga do estamos, porque morirá, *é á mí me pesará de los que murieren.*" Relacion hecha por el Señor Andrés de Tápia sobre la Conquista de México.—K.]

As he came into the presence of Cortés, the lord of Tezcuco descended from his palanquin, and the obsequious officers swept the ground before him as he advanced. He appeared to be a young man of about twenty-five years of age, with a comely presence, erect and stately in his deportment. He made the Mexican salutation usually addressed to persons of high rank, touching the earth with his right hand, and raising it to his head. Cortés embraced him as he rose, when the young prince informed him that he came as the representative of Montezuma, to bid the Spaniards welcome to his capital. He then presented the general with three pearls of uncommon size and lustre. Cortés, in return, threw over Cacama's neck a chain of cut glass, which, where glass was as rare as diamonds, might be admitted to have a value as real as the latter. After this interchange of courtesies, and the most friendly and respectful assurances on the part of Cortés, the Indian prince withdrew, leaving the Spaniards strongly impressed with the superiority of his state and bearing over anything they had hitherto seen in the country.[23]

Resuming its march, the army kept along the southern borders of the lake of Chalco, overshadowed, at that time, by noble woods, and by orchards glowing with autumnal fruits, of unknown names, but rich and tempting hues. More

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 75.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—"We esteemed it a great matter, and said amongst ourselves, If this cacique appeared in such state, what must be that displayed by the great Montezuma?" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

frequently it passed through cultivated fields waving with the yellow harvest, and irrigated by canals introduced from the neighboring lake; the whole showing a careful and economical husbandry, essential to the maintenance of a crowded population.

Leaving the main land, the Spaniards came on the great dike or causeway, which stretches some four or five miles in length and divides lake Chalco from Xochicalco on the west. It was a lance in breadth in the narrowest part, and in some places wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast. It was a solid structure of stone and lime running directly through the lake, and struck the Spaniards as one of the most remarkable works which they had seen in the country.

As they passed along, they beheld the gay spectacle of multitudes of Indians darting up and down in their light pirogues, eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, or bearing the products of the country to the neighboring cities. They were amazed, also, by the sight of the *chinampas,* or floating gardens,—those wandering islands of verdure, to which we shall have occasion to return hereafter, —teeming with flowers and vegetables, and moving like rafts over the waters. All round the margin, and occasionally far in the lake, they beheld little towns and villages, which, half concealed by the foliage, and gathered in white clusters round the shore, looked in the distance like companies of wild swans riding quietly on the waves. A scene so new and wonderful filled their rude hearts with amazement. It seemed like enchantment; and they

could find nothing to compare it with but the magical pictures in the "Amadis de Gaula."[24] Few pictures, indeed, in that or any other legend of chivalry, could surpass the realities of their own experience. The life of the adventurer in the New World was romance put into action. What wonder, then, if the Spaniard of that day, feeding his imagination with dreams of enchantment at home and with its realities abroad, should have displayed a Quixotic enthusiasm,—a romantic exaltation of character, not to be comprehended by the colder spirits of other lands!

Midway across the lake the army halted at the town of Cuitlahuac, a place of moderate size, but distinguished by the beauty of the buildings,—the most beautiful, according to Cortés, that he had yet seen in the country.[25] After taking some refreshment at this place, they continued their march along the dike. Though broader in this northern section, the troops found themselves much embarrassed by the throng of Indians, who, not content with gazing on them from the boats, climbed up the causeway and lined the sides of the road. The

[24] "Nos quedámos admirados," exclaims Diaz, with simple wonder, "y deziamos que parecia á las casas de encantamento, que cuentan en el libro de Amadis!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87. An edition of this celebrated romance in its Castilian dress had appeared before this time, as the prologue to the second edition of 1521 speaks of a former one in the reign of the "Catholic Sovereigns." See Cervantes, Don Quixote, ed. Pellicer (Madrid, 1797), tom. i., Discurso prelim.

[25] "Una ciudad, la mas hermosa, aunque pequeña, que hasta entonces habiamos visto, assí de muy bien obradas Casas, y Torres, como de la buena órden, que en el fundamento de ella habia por ser armada toda sobre Agua." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 76.) The Spaniards gave this aquatic city the name of Venezuela, or Little Venice. Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 2, cap. 4.

general, afraid that his ranks might be disordered, and that too great familiarity might diminish a salutary awe in the natives, was obliged to resort not merely to command, but menace, to clear a passage. He now found, as he advanced, a considerable change in the feelings shown towards the government. He heard only of the pomp and magnificence, nothing of the oppressions, of Montezuma. Contrary to the usual fact, it seemed that the respect for the court was greatest in its immediate neighborhood.

From the causeway, the army descended on that narrow point of land which divides the waters of the Chalco from the Tezcucan lake, but which in those days was overflowed for many a mile now laid bare.[26] Traversing this peninsula, they entered the royal residence of Iztapalapan, a place containing twelve or fifteen thousand houses, according to Cortés.[27] It was governed by Cuitlahua, the emperor's brother, who, to do greater

[26] M. de Humboldt has dotted the *conjectural* limits of the ancient lake in his admirable chart of the Mexican Valley. (Atlas géographique et physique de la Nouvelle-Espagne (Paris, 1811), carte 3.) Notwithstanding his great care, it is not easy always to reconcile his topography with the itineraries of the Conquerors, so much has the face of the country been changed by natural and artificial causes. It is still less possible to reconcile their narratives with the maps of Clavigero, Lopez, Robertson, and others, defying equally topography and history.

[27] Several writers notice a visit of the Spaniards to Tezcuco on the way to the capital. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 42.—Solís, Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 9.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 4.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 74.) This improbable episode—which, it may be remarked, has led these authors into some geographical perplexities, not to say blunders—is altogether too remarkable to have been passed over in silence in the minute relation of Bernal Diaz, and that of Cortés, neither of whom alludes to it.

honor to the general, had invited the lords of some neighboring cities, of the royal house of Mexico, like himself, to be present at the interview. This was conducted with much ceremony, and, after the usual present of gold and delicate stuffs,[28] a collation was served to the Spaniards in one of the great halls of the palace. The excellence of the architecture here, also, excited the admiration of the general, who does not hesitate, in the glow of his enthusiasm, to pronounce some of the buildings equal to the best in Spain.[29] They were of stone, and the spacious apartments had roofs of odorous cedar-wood, while the walls were tapestried with fine cotton stained with brilliant colors.

But the pride of Iztapalapan, on which its lord had freely lavished his care and his revenues, was its celebrated gardens. They covered an immense tract of land; were laid out in regular squares, and the paths intersecting them were bordered with trellises, supporting creepers and aromatic shrubs that loaded the air with their perfumes. The gardens were stocked with fruit-trees, imported from distant places, and with the gaudy family of flowers which belonged to the Mexican flora, scientifically arranged, and growing luxuriant in the equable temperature of the table-land. The natural dryness of the atmosphere was counteracted

[28] "E me diéron," says Cortés, "hasta tres, ó quatro mil Castellanos, y algunas Esclavas, y Ropa, é me hiciéron muy buen acogimiento." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 76.

[29] "Tiene el Señor de ella unas Casas nuevas, que aun no están acabadas, que son tan buenas como las mejores de España, digo de grandes y bien labradas." Ibid., p. 77.

by means of aqueducts and canals that carried water into all parts of the grounds.

In one quarter was an aviary, filled with numerous kinds of birds, remarkable in this region both for brilliancy of plumage and of song. The gardens were intersected by a canal communicating with the lake of Tezcuco, and of sufficient size for barges to enter from the latter. But the most elaborate piece of work was a huge reservoir of stone, filled to a considerable height with water well supplied with different sorts of fish. The basin was sixteen hundred paces in circumference, and was surrounded by a walk, made also of stone, wide enough for four persons to go abreast. The sides were curiously sculptured, and a flight of steps led to the water below, which fed the aqueducts above noticed, or, collected into fountains, diffused a perpetual moisture.

Such are the accounts transmitted of these celebrated gardens, at a period when similar horticultural establishments were unknown in Europe;[30] and we might well doubt their existence in this semi-civilized land, were it not a matter of such notoriety at the time and so explicitly attested by the invaders. But a generation had scarcely passed after the Conquest, before a sad change came over these scenes so beautiful. The town itself was deserted, and the shore of the lake was strewed with the wreck of buildings which once were its ornament and its glory. The garden shared the

[30] The earliest instance of a Garden of Plants in Europe is said to have been at Padua, in 1545. Carli, Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 21.

fate of the city. The retreating waters withdrew the means of nourishment, converting the flourishing plains into a foul and unsightly morass, the haunt of loathsome reptiles; and the water-fowl built her nest in what had once been the palaces of princes![31]

In the city of Iztapalapan, Cortés took up his quarters for the night. We may imagine what a crowd of ideas must have pressed on the mind of the Conqueror, as, surrounded by these evidences of civilization, he prepared with his handful of followers to enter the capital of a monarch who, as he had abundant reason to know, regarded him with distrust and aversion. This capital was now but a few miles distant, distinctly visible from Iztapalapan. And as its long lines of glittering edifices, struck by the rays of the evening sun, trembled on the dark-blue waters of the lake, it looked like a thing of fairy creation, rather than the work of mortal hands. Into this city of enchantment Cortés prepared to make his entry on the following morning.[32]

[31] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 44.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 13.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

> There Aztlan stood upon the farther shore;
> Amid the shade of trees its dwellings rose,
> Their level roofs with turrets set around,
> And battlements all burnished white, which shone
> Like silver in the sunshine. I beheld
> The imperial city, her far-circling walls,
> Her garden groves and stately palaces,
> Her temples mountain size, her thousand roofs;
> And when I saw her might and majesty,
> My mind misgave me then."
>
> SOUTHEY'S Madoc, Part 1, canto 6.

CHAPTER IX

ENVIRONS OF MEXICO—INTERVIEW WITH MONTEZUMA—ENTRANCE INTO THE CAPITAL—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION—VISIT TO THE EMPEROR

1519

WITH the first faint streak of dawn, the Spanish general was up, mustering his followers. They gathered, with beating hearts, under their respective banners, as the trumpet sent forth its spirit-stirring sounds across water and woodland, till they died away in distant echoes among the mountains. The sacred flames on the altars of numberless *teocallis*, dimly seen through the gray mists of morning,[1] indicated the site of the capital, till temple, tower, and palace were fully revealed in the glorious illumination which the sun, as he rose above the eastern barrier, poured over the beautiful Valley. It was the eighth of November, 1519, a conspicuous day in

[1] [Alaman objects to my speaking of the "gray mists of morning" in connection with the Aztec capital. "In the beginning of November," he says, "there is no such thing as a mist to be seen in the morning, or indeed in any part of the day, in the Valley of Mexico, where the weather is uncommonly bright and beautiful. The historian," he adds, "has confounded the climate of Mexico with that of England or the United States." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 337.]

history, as that on which the Europeans first set foot in the capital of the Western World.

Cortés with his little body of horse formed a sort of advanced guard to the army. Then came the Spanish infantry, who in a summer's campaign had acquired the discipline and the weather-beaten aspect of veterans. The baggage occupied the centre; and the rear was closed by the dark files[2] of Tlascalan warriors. The whole number must have fallen short of seven thousand; of which less than four hundred were Spaniards.[3]

For a short distance, the army kept along the narrow tongue of land that divides the Tezcucan from the Chalcan waters, when it entered on the great dike, which, with the exception of an angle near the commencement, stretches in a perfectly straight line across the salt floods of Tezcuco to the gates of the capital. It was the same causeway, or rather the basis of that, which still forms the great southern avenue of Mexico.[4] The Span-

[2] [A Spanish translator incorrectly renders the words "dark files" by *indisciplinadas filas,* "undisciplined files." Señor Alaman, correcting, in this instance at least, the translation instead of the original, objects to this language. We may talk, says the critic, of the different kind of discipline peculiar to the Tlascalans, but not of their want of discipline, a defect which can hardly be charged on the most warlike nation of Anahuac. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 337.]

[3] He took about 6000 warriors from Tlascala; and some few of the Cempoallan and other Indian allies continued with him. The Spanish force on leaving Vera Cruz amounted to about 400 foot and 15 horse. In the remonstrance of the disaffected soldiers, after the murderous Tlascalan combats, they speak of having lost fifty of their number since the beginning of the campaign. *Ante,* vol. ii. p. 150.

[4] "La calzada d'Iztapalapan est fondée sur cette même digue ancienne, sur laquelle Cortéz fit des prodiges de valeur dans ses rencontres avec les assiégés." (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 57.)

iards had occasion more than ever to admire the mechanical science of the Aztecs, in the geometrical precision with which the work was executed, as well as the solidity of its construction. It was composed of huge stones well laid in cement, and wide enough, throughout its whole extent, for ten horsemen to ride abreast.

They saw, as they passed along, several large towns, resting on piles, and reaching far into the water,—a kind of architecture which found great favor with the Aztecs, being in imitation of that of their metropolis.[5] The busy population obtained a good subsistence from the manufacture of salt, which they extracted from the waters of the great lake. The duties on the traffic in this article were a considerable source of revenue to the crown.

Everywhere the Conquerors beheld the evidence of a crowded and thriving population, exceeding all they had yet seen. The temples and principal buildings of the cities were covered with a hard white stucco, which glistened like enamel in the level beams of the morning. The margin of the great basin was more thickly gemmed than that of Chalco with towns and hamlets.[6] The water

[At present the road of Tlalplan, or St. Augustine of the Caves (San Augustin de las Cuevas). Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 338.]

[5] Among these towns were several containing from three to five or six thousand dwellings, according to Cortés, whose barbarous orthography in proper names will not easily be recognized by Mexican or Spaniard. Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 78.

[6] Father Toribio Benavente does not stint his panegyric in speaking of the neighborhood of the capital, which he saw in its glory. "Creo, que en toda nuestra Europa hay pocas ciudades que tengan tal

was darkened by swarms of canoes filled with Indians,[7] who clambered up the sides of the causeway and gazed with curious astonishment on the strangers. And here, also, they beheld those fairy islands of flowers, overshadowed occasionally by trees of considerable size, rising and falling with the gentle undulation of the billows. At the distance of half a league from the capital, they encountered a solid work or curtain of stone, which traversed the dike. It was twelve feet high, was strengthened by towers at the extremities, and in the centre was a battlemented gateway, which opened a passage to the troops. It was called the Fort of Xoloc, and became memorable in after-times as the position occupied by Cortés in the famous siege of Mexico.

Here they were met by several hundred Aztec chiefs, who came out to announce the approach of Montezuma and to welcome the Spaniards to his capital. They were dressed in the fanciful gala costume of the country, with the *maxtlatl,* or cotton sash, around their loins, and a broad mantle of the same material, or of the brilliant feather-embroidery, flowing gracefully down their shoulders. On their necks and arms they displayed collars and

asiento y tal comarca, con tantos pueblos á la redonda de sí y tan bien asentados." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

[7] It is not necessary, however, to adopt Herrera's account of 50,000 canoes, which, he says, were constantly employed in supplying the capital with provisions! (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 14.) The poet-chronicler Saavedra is more modest in his estimate:

> " Dos mil y mas canoas cada dia
> Bastecen el gran pueblo Mexicano
> De la mas y la menos niñería
> Que es necesario al alimento humano."
>
> El Peregrino Indiano, canto 11.

bracelets of turquoise mosaic, with which delicate plumage was curiously mingled,[8] while their ears, under-lips, and occasionally their noses, were garnished with pendants formed of precious stones, or crescents of fine gold. As each cacique made the usual formal salutation of the country separately to the general, the tedious ceremony delayed the march more than an hour. After this, the army experienced no further interruption till it reached a bridge near the gates of the city. It was built of wood, since replaced by one of stone, and was thrown across an opening of the dike, which furnished an outlet to the waters when agitated by the winds or swollen by a sudden influx in the rainy season. It was a drawbridge; and the Spaniards, as they crossed it, felt how truly they were committing themselves to the mercy of Montezuma, who, by thus cutting off their communications with the country, might hold them prisoners in his capital.[9]

In the midst of these unpleasant reflections, they beheld the glittering retinue of the emperor emerging from the great street which led then, as it still does, through the heart of the city.[10] Amidst a

[8] "Usaban unos brazaletes de musaico, hechos de turquezas con unas plumas ricas que salian de ellos, que eran mas altas que la cabeza, y bordadas con plumas ricas y con oro, y unas bandas de oro, que subian con las plumas." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 9.

[9] Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 65.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 78, 79.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

[10] Cardinal Lorenzana says, the street intended was, probably, that crossing the city from the Hospital of San Antonio. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 79, nota.) This is confirmed by Sahagun. "Y así en aquel

crowd of Indian nobles, preceded by three officers of state bearing golden wands,[11] they saw the royal palanquin blazing with burnished gold. It was borne on the shoulders of nobles, and over it a canopy of gaudy feather-work, powdered with jewels and fringed with silver, was supported by four attendants of the same rank. They were barefooted, and walked with a slow, measured pace, and with eyes bent on the ground. When the train had come within a convenient distance, it halted, and Montezuma, descending from his litter, came forward, leaning on the arms of the lords of Tezcuco and Iztapalapan, his nephew and brother, both of whom, as we have seen, had already been made known to the Spaniards. As the monarch advanced under the canopy, the obsequious attendants strewed the ground with cotton tapestry, that his imperial feet might not be contaminated by the rude soil. His subjects of high and low degree, who lined the sides of the causeway, bent forward with their eyes fastened on the ground as he passed, and some of the humbler class prostrated themselves before him.[12] Such was the

trecho que está desde la Iglesia de San Antonio (que ellos llaman Xuluco) que va por cave las casas de Alvarado, hácia el Hospital de la Concepcion, salió Moctezuma á recibir de paz á D. Hernando Cortés." Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16. [The present Calle del Rastro, which continues, under different names, from the guard-house of San Antonio Abad to the Plaza. According to an early tradition, Montezuma and Cortés met in front of the spot where the Hospital of Jesus now stands, and the site for the building was chosen on that account. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 339.]

[11] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.

[12] "Toda la gente que estaba en las calles se le humiliaban y hacian profunda reverencia y grande acatamiento sin levantar los ojos á le

homage paid to the Indian despot, showing that the slavish forms of Oriental adulation were to be found among the rude inhabitants of the Western World.

Montezuma wore the girdle and ample square cloak, *tilmatli*, of his nation. It was made of the finest cotton, with the embroidered ends gathered in a knot round his neck. His feet were defended by sandals having soles of gold, and the leathern thongs which bound them to his ankles were embossed with the same metal. Both the cloak and sandals were sprinkled with pearls and precious stones, among which the emerald and the *chalchivitl*—a green stone of higher estimation than any other among the Aztecs—were conspicuous. On his head he wore no other ornament than a *panache* of plumes of the royal green, which floated down his back, the badge of military, rather than of regal, rank.

He was at this time about forty years of age. His person was tall and thin, but not ill made. His hair, which was black and straight, was not very long; to wear it short was considered unbecoming persons of rank. His beard was thin; his complexion somewhat paler than is often found in his dusky, or rather copper-colored, race. His features, though serious in their expression, did not wear the look of melancholy, indeed, of dejection, which characterizes his portrait, and which may well have settled on them at a later period. He

mirar, sino que todos estaban hasta que él era pasado, *tan inclinados como frayles en Gloria Patri.*" Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

moved with dignity, and his whole demeanor, tempered by an expression of benignity not to have been anticipated from the reports circulated of his character, was worthy of a great prince. Such is the portrait left to us of the celebrated Indian emperor in this his first interview with the white men.[13]

The army halted as he drew near. Cortés, dismounting, threw his reins to a page, and, supported by a few of the principal cavaliers, advanced to meet him. The interview must have been one of uncommon interest to both. In Montezuma, Cortés beheld the lord of the broad realms he had traversed, whose magnificence and power had been the burden of every tongue. In the Spaniard, on the other hand, the Aztec prince saw the strange being whose history seemed to be so mysteriously connected with his own; the predicted one of his oracles; whose achievements proclaimed him something more than human. But, whatever may have

[13] For the preceding account of the equipage and appearance of Montezuma, see Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88,—Carta de Zuazo, MS.,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 65,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra, et cap. 45,—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 22,—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16,—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—The noble Castilian or rather Mexican bard, Saavedra, who belonged to the generation after the Conquest, has introduced most of the particulars in his rhyming chronicle. The following specimen will probably suffice for the reader:

> " Yva el gran Moteçuma atauiado
> De manta açul y blanca con gran falda,
> De algodon muy sutil y delicado,
> Y al remate vna concha de esmeralda;
> En la parte que el nudo tiene dado,
> Y una tiara á modo de guirnalda,
> Zapatos que de oro son las suelas
> Asidos con muy ricas correhuelas."
>
> El Peregrino Indiano, canto 11.

been the monarch's feelings, he so far suppressed them as to receive his guest with princely courtesy, and to express his satisfaction at personally seeing him in his capital.[14] Cortés responded by the most profound expression of respect, while he made ample acknowledgments for the substantial proofs which the emperor had given the Spaniards of his munificence. He then hung round Montezuma's neck a sparkling chain of colored crystal, accompanying this with a movement as if to embrace him, when he was restrained by the two Aztec lords, shocked at the menaced profanation of the sacred person of their master.[15] After the interchange of these civilities, Montezuma appointed his brother to conduct the Spaniards to their residence in the capital, and, again entering his litter, was borne off amidst prostrate crowds in the same state in which he had come. The Spaniards quickly followed, and, with colors flying and music playing, soon made their entrance into the southern quarter of Tenochtitlan.[16]

Here, again, they found fresh cause for admiration in the grandeur of the city and the superior style of its architecture. The dwellings of the poorer class were, indeed, chiefly of reeds and mud. But the great avenue through which they were now marching was lined with the houses of the nobles,

[14] "Satis vultu læto," says Martyr, "an stomacho sedatus, et an hospites per vim quis unquam libens suscceperit, experti loquantur." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[15] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 79.

[16] "Entráron en la ciudad de Méjico á punto de guerra, tocando los atambores, y con banderas desplegadas," etc. Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 15.

who were encouraged by the emperor to make the capital their residence. They were built of a red porous stone drawn from quarries in the neighborhood, and, though they rarely rose to a second story, often covered a large space of ground. The flat roofs, *azoteas,* were protected by stone parapets, so that every house was a fortress. Sometimes these roofs resembled parterres of flowers, so thickly were they covered with them, but more frequently these were cultivated in broad terraced gardens, laid out between the edifices.[17] Occasionally a great square or market-place intervened, surrounded by its porticoes of stone and stucco; or a pyramidal temple reared its colossal bulk, crowned with its tapering sanctuaries, and altars blazing with inextinguishable fires. The great street facing the southern causeway, unlike most others in the place, was wide, and extended some miles in nearly a straight line, as before noticed, through the centre of the city. A spectator standing at one end of it, as his eye ranged along the deep vista of temples, terraces, and gardens, might clearly discern the other, with the blue mountains in the distance, which, in the transparent atmosphere of the table-land, seemed almost in contact with the buildings.

But what most impressed the Spaniards was the throngs of people who swarmed through the streets and on the canals, filling every door-way and window and clustering on the roofs of the buildings. "I well remember the spectacle," exclaims

[17] "Et giardini alti et bassi, che era cosa maravigliosa da vedere." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

Bernal Diaz: "it seems now, after so many years, as present to my mind as if it were but yesterday."[18] But what must have been the sensation of the Aztecs themselves, as they looked on the portentous pageant! as they heard, now for the first time, the well-cemented pavement ring under the iron tramp of the horses,—the strange animals which fear had clothed in such supernatural terrors; as they gazed on the children of the East, revealing their celestial origin in their fair complexions; saw the bright falchions and bonnets of steel, a metal to them unknown, glancing like meteors in the sun, while sounds of unearthly music—at least, such as their rude instruments had never wakened —floated in the air! But every other emotion was lost in that of deadly hatred, when they beheld their detested enemy the Tlascalan stalking, in defiance, as it were, through their streets, and staring around with looks of ferocity and wonder, like some wild animal of the forest who had strayed by chance from his native fastnesses into the haunts of civilization.[19]

As they passed down the spacious street, the troops repeatedly traversed bridges suspended

[18] "¿Quien podrá," exclaims the old soldier, "dezir la multitud de hombres, y mugeres, y muchachos, que estauan en las calles, é açuteas, y en Canoas en aquellas acequias, que nos salian á mirar? Era cosa de notar, que agora que lo estoy escriuiendo, se me representa todo delante de mis ojos, como si ayer fuera quando esto passó." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.

[19] "Ad spectaculum," says the penetrating Martyr, "tandem Hispanis placidum, quia diu optatum, Tenustiatanis prudentibus forte aliter, quia verentur fore, vt hi hospites quietem suam Elysiam veniant perturbaturi; de populo secus, qui nil sentit æque delectabile, quàm res novas ante oculos in presentiarum habere, de futuro nihil anxius." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

above canals, along which they saw the Indian barks gliding swiftly with their little cargoes of fruits and vegetables for the markets of Tenochtitlan.[20] At length they halted before a broad area near the centre of the city, where rose the huge pyramidal pile dedicated to the patron war-god of the Aztecs, second only, in size as well as sanctity, to the temple of Cholula, and covering the same ground now in part occupied by the great cathedral of Mexico.[21]

Facing the western gate of the enclosure of the temple, stood a low range of stone buildings, spreading over a wide extent of ground, the palace of Axayacatl, Montezuma's father, built by that monarch about fifty years before.[22] It was appropriated as the barracks of the Spaniards. The emperor himself was in the court-yard, waiting to receive them. Approaching Cortés, he

[20] The euphonious name of *Tenochtitlan* is commonly derived from Aztec words signifying "the *tuna,* or cactus, on a rock," the appearance of which, as the reader may remember, was to determine the site of the future capital. (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, Parte 3, cap. 7.—Esplic. de la Coleccion de Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. iv.) Another etymology derives the word from *Tenoch,* the name of one of the founders of the monarchy.

[21] ["Por algunos manuscritos que he consultado é investigaciones que he hecho, me inclino á creer, que el templo se estendia desde la esquina de la calle de *Plateros* y *Empedradillo* hasta la de *Cordobanes;* y de P. á O., desde el tercio ó cuarto de la placeta del *Empedradillo,* hasta penetrar unas cuantas varas hácia el O., dentro de las aceras que miran al P., y forman las calles del *Seminario* y del *Relox.*" Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 103.]

[22] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 78.—It occupied what is now the corner of the streets "Del Indio Triste" and "Tacuba." * Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 7, et seq.

* [Consequently, says Alaman, it must have faced the east, not the west gate of the Temple. Conquista de Méjico, tom. i. p. 343. —K.]

took from a vase of flowers, borne by one of his slaves, a massy collar, in which the shell of a species of crawfish, much prized by the Indians, was set in gold and connected by heavy links of the same metal. From this chain depended eight ornaments, also of gold, made in resemblance of the same shell-fish, a span in length each, and of delicate workmanship;[23] for the Aztec goldsmiths were confessed to have shown skill in their craft not inferior to their brethren of Europe.[24] Montezuma, as he hung the gorgeous collar round the general's neck, said, "This palace belongs to you, Malinche"[25] (the epithet by which he always addressed him), "and your brethren. Rest after your fatigues, for you have much need to do so, and in a little while I will visit you again." So saying, he withdrew with his attendants, evincing in this act a delicate consideration not to have been expected in a barbarian.

Cortés' first care was to inspect his new quarters. The building, though spacious, was low, consisting of one floor, except, indeed, in the centre, where it rose to an additional story. The

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 88.—Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.

[24] Boturini says, greater, by the acknowledgment of the goldsmiths themselves. "Los plateros de Madrid, viendo algunas Piezas, y Brazaletes de oro, con que se armaban en guerra los Reyes, y Capitanes Indianos, confessáron, que eran inimitables en Europa." (Idea, p. 78.) And Oviedo, speaking of their work in jewelry, remarks, "Io ví algunas piedras jaspes, calcidonias, jacintos, corniolas, é plasmas de esmeraldas, é otras de otras especies labradas é fechas, cabezas de Aves, é otras hechas animales é otras figuras, que dudo haber en España ni en Italia quien las supiera hacer con tanta perficion." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11.

[25] *Ante*, vol. ii. p. 175.

apartments were of great size, and afforded accommodations, according to the testimony of the Conquerors themselves, for the whole army![26] The hardy mountaineers of Tlascala were, probably, not very fastidious, and might easily find a shelter in the out-buildings, or under temporary awnings in the ample court-yards. The best apartments were hung with gay cotton draperies, the floors covered with mats or rushes. There were, also, low stools made of single pieces of wood elaborately carved, and in most of the apartments beds made of the palm-leaf, woven into a thick mat, with coverlets, and sometimes canopies, of cotton. These mats were the only beds used by the natives, whether of high or low degree.[27]

After a rapid survey of this gigantic pile, the general assigned his troops their respective quarters, and took as vigilant precautions for security as if he had anticipated a siege instead of a friendly entertainment. The place was encompassed by a stone wall of considerable thickness, with towers or heavy buttresses at intervals, affording a good means of defence. He planted his cannon so as to command the approaches, stationed his sentinels along the works, and, in short, enforced in every respect as strict military discipline as had been observed in any part of the march. He well knew the importance to his little band, at least for the present, of conciliating the

[26] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 80.

[27] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., loc. cit.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 83, cap. 5.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16.

good will of the citizens; and, to avoid all possibility of collision, he prohibited any soldier from leaving his quarters without orders, under pain of death. Having taken these precautions, he allowed his men to partake of the bountiful collation which had been prepared for them.

They had been long enough in the country to become reconciled to, if not to relish, the peculiar cooking of the Aztecs. The appetite of the soldier is not often dainty, and on the present occasion it cannot be doubted that the Spaniards did full justice to the savory productions of the royal kitchen. During the meal they were served by numerous Mexican slaves, who were, indeed, distributed through the palace, anxious to do the bidding of the strangers. After the repast was concluded, and they had taken their *siesta,* not less important to a Spaniard than food itself, the presence of the emperor was again announced.

Montezuma was attended by a few of his principal nobles. He was received with much deference by Cortés; and, after the parties had taken their seats, a conversation commenced between them, through the aid of Doña Marina, while the cavaliers and Aztec chieftains stood around in respectful silence.

Montezuma made many inquiries concerning the country of the Spaniards, their sovereign, the nature of his government, and especially their own motives in visiting Anahuac. Cortés explained these motives by the desire to see so distinguished a monarch and to declare to him the true Faith professed by the Christians. With

AUDIENCE OF CORTÉS WITH MONTEZUMA

Original at Paris

rare discretion, he contented himself with dropping this hint, for the present, allowing it to ripen in the mind of the emperor, till a future conference. The latter asked whether those white men who in the preceding year had landed on the eastern shores of his empire were their countrymen. He showed himself well informed of the proceedings of the Spaniards from their arrival in Tabasco to the present time, information of which had been regularly transmitted in the hieroglyphical paintings. He was curious, also, in regard to the rank of his visitors in their own country; inquiring if they were the kinsmen of the sovereign. Cortés replied, they were kinsmen of one another, and subjects of their great monarch, who held them all in peculiar estimation. Before his departure, Montezuma made himself acquainted with the names of the principal cavaliers, and the position they occupied in the army.

At the conclusion of the interview, the Aztec prince commanded his attendants to bring forward the presents prepared for his guests. They consisted of cotton dresses, enough to supply every man, it is said, including the allies, with a suit![28] And he did not fail to add the usual ac-

[28] "Muchas y diversas Joyas de Oro, y Plata, y Plumajes, y con fasta cinco ó seis mil Piezas de Ropa de Algodon muy ricas, y de diversas maneras texida, y labrada." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 80.) Even this falls short of truth, according to Diaz. "Tenia apercebido el gran Monteçuma muy ricas joyas de oro, y de muchas hechuras, que dió á nuestro Capitan, é assí mismo á cada vno de nuestros Capitanes dió cositas de oro, y tres cargas de mantas de labores ricas de pluma, y entre todos los soldados tambien nos dió á cada vno á dos cargas de mantas, con alegría, y en todo parecia gran señor." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 89.) "Sex millia vestium, aiunt qui eas vidêre." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

companiment of gold chains and other ornaments, which he distributed in profusion among the Spaniards. He then withdrew with the same ceremony with which he had entered, leaving every one deeply impressed with his munificence and his affability, so unlike what they had been taught to expect by what they now considered an invention of the enemy.[29]

That evening the Spaniards celebrated their arrival in the Mexican capital by a general discharge of artillery. The thunders of the ordnance, reverberating among the buildings and shaking them to their foundations, the stench of the sulphureous vapor that rolled in volumes above the walls of the encampment, reminding the inhabitants of the explosions of the great *volcan,* filled the hearts of the superstitious Aztecs with dismay. It proclaimed to them that their city held in its bosom those dread beings whose path had been marked with desolation, and who could call down the thunderbolts to consume their enemies! It was doubtless the policy of Cortés to strengthen this superstitious feeling as far as possible, and to impress the natives, at the outset, with a salutary awe of the supernatural powers of the Spaniards.[30]

[29] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 66.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

[30] "La noche siguiente jugáron la artillería por la solemnidad de haber llegado sin daño á donde deseaban; pero los Indios como no usados á los truenos de la artillería, mal edor de la pólvora, recibiéron grande alteracion y miedo toda aquella noche." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 17.

On the following morning, the general requested permission to return the emperor's visit, by waiting on him in his palace. This was readily granted, and Montezuma sent his officers to conduct the Spaniards to his presence. Cortés dressed himself in his richest habit, and left the quarters attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, Velasquez, and Ordaz, together with five or six of the common file.

The royal habitation was at no great distance. It stood on the ground, to the southwest of the cathedral, since covered in part by the *Casa del Estado,* the palace of the dukes of Monteleone, the descendants of Cortés.[31] It was a vast, irregular pile of low stone buildings, like that garrisoned by the Spaniards.[32] So spacious was it, indeed, that, as one of the Conquerors assures us, although he had visited it more than once, for the express purpose, he had been too much fatigued each time by wandering through the apartments ever to see the whole of it.[33] It was built of the red porous stone of the country, *tetzontli,* was ornamented

[31] "C'est là que la famille construisit le bel édifice dans lequel se trouvent les archives del Estado, et qui est passé avec tout l'héritage au duc Napolitain de Monteleone." (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 72.) The inhabitants of modern Mexico have large obligations to this inquisitive traveller for the care he has taken to identify the memorable localities of their capital. It is not often that a philosophical treatise is also a good *manuel du voyageur.*

[32] [The palace of Montezuma, according to Ramirez, "occupied the site where the national palace now stands, including that of the university and the adjacent houses, and extending to the Plaza del Volador, or new market-place. This was the ordinary residence of the last Montezuma, and the place where he was actually made prisoner." Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 103.]

[33] "Et io entrai più di quattro volte in una casa del gran Signor non per altro effetto che per vederla, et ogni volta vi camminauo

with marble, and on the façade over the principal entrance were sculptured the arms or device of Montezuma,* an eagle bearing an ocelot in his talons.[34]

In the courts through which the Spaniards passed, fountains of crystal water were playing, fed from the copious reservoir on the distant hill of Chapoltepec, and supplying in their turn more than a hundred baths in the interior of the palace. Crowds of Aztec nobles were sauntering up and down in these squares, and in the outer halls, loitering away their hours in attendance on the court. The apartments were of immense size, though not lofty. The ceilings were of various sorts of odoriferous wood ingeniously carved; the floors covered with mats of the palm-leaf. The walls were hung with cotton richly stained, with the skins of wild animals, or gorgeous draperies of feather-work wrought in imitation of birds, insects, and flowers, with the nice art and glowing radiance of colors that might compare with the tapestries of Flanders. Clouds of incense rolled up from censers and diffused intoxicating odors through the apartments. The Spaniards might well have fancied themselves in the voluptuous

tanto che mi stancauo, et mai la fini di vedere tutta." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[34] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 71.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 9.—The authorities call it "tiger," an animal not known in America. I have ventured to substitute the "ocelot," *tlalocelotl* of Mexico, a native animal, which, being of the same family, might easily be confounded by the Spaniards with the tiger of the Old Continent.

* [The totem or "beast symbol" of the clan to which it belonged.—M.]

precincts of an Eastern harem, instead of treading the halls of a wild barbaric chief in the Western World.[35]

On reaching the hall of audience, the Mexican officers took off their sandals, and covered their gay attire with a mantle of *nequen,* a coarse stuff made of the fibres of the maguey, worn only by the poorest classes. This act of humiliation was imposed on all, except the members of his own family, who approached the sovereign.[36] Thus bare-footed, with downcast eyes and formal obeisance, they ushered the Spaniards into the royal presence.

They found Montezuma seated at the further end of a spacious saloon and surrounded by a few of his favorite chiefs. He received them kindly, and very soon Cortés, without much ceremony, entered on the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts. He was fully aware of the importance of gaining the royal convert, whose example would have such an influence on the conversion of his people. The general, therefore, prepared to display the whole store of his theological sci-

[35] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 9.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 71.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5, 46.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 111–114.

[36] "Para entrar en su palacio, á que ellos llaman Tecpa, todos se descalzaban, y los que entraban á negociar con él habian de llevar mantas groseras encima de si, y si eran grandes señores ó en tiempo de frio, sobre las mantas buenas que llevaban vestidas, ponian una manta grosera y pobre; y para hablarle, estaban muy humiliados y sin levantar los ojos." (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) There is no better authority than this worthy missionary for the usages of the ancient Aztecs, of which he had such large personal knowledge.

ence, with the most winning arts of rhetoric he could command, while the interpretation was conveyed through the silver tones of Marina, as inseparable from him, on these occasions, as his shadow.

He set forth, as clearly as he could, the ideas entertained by the Church in regard to the holy mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. From this he ascended to the origin of things, the creation of the world, the first pair, paradise, and the fall of man. He assured Montezuma that the idols he worshipped were Satan under different forms. A sufficient proof of it was the bloody sacrifices they imposed, which he contrasted with the pure and simple rite of the mass. Their worship would sink him in perdition. It was to snatch his soul, and the souls of his people, from the flames of eternal fire by opening to them a purer faith, that the Christians had come to his land. And he earnestly besought him not to neglect the occasion, but to secure his salvation by embracing the Cross, the great sign of human redemption.

The eloquence of the preacher was wasted on the insensible heart of his royal auditor. It doubtless lost somewhat of its efficacy, strained through the imperfect interpretation of so recent a neophyte as the Indian damsel. But the doctrines were too abstruse in themselves to be comprehended at a glance by the rude intellect of a barbarian. And Montezuma may have, perhaps, thought it was not more monstrous to feed on the flesh of a fellow-creature than on that of the Creator him-

self.[37] He was, besides, steeped in the superstitions of his country from his cradle. He had been educated in the straitest sect of her religion, had been himself a priest before his election to the throne, and was now the head both of the religion and the state. Little probability was there that such a man would be open to argument or persuasion, even from the lips of a more practised polemic than the Spanish commander. How could he abjure the faith that was intertwined with the dearest affections of his heart and the very elements of his being? How could he be false to the gods who had raised him to such prosperity and honors, and whose shrines were intrusted to his especial keeping?

He listened, however, with silent attention, until the general had concluded his homily. He then replied that he knew the Spaniards had held this discourse wherever they had been. He doubted not their God was, as they said, a good being. His gods, also, were good to him. Yet what his visitor said of the creation of the world was like what he had been taught to believe.[38] It was not worth while to discourse further of the matter. His ancestors, he said, were not the origi-

[37] The ludicrous effect—if the subject be not too grave to justify the expression—of a literal belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation in the mother-country, even at this day, is well illustrated by Blanco White, Letters from Spain (London, 1822), let. 1.

[38] "Y en esso de la creacion del mundo assí lo tenemos nosotros creido muchos tiempos passados." (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.) For some points of resemblance between the Aztec and Hebrew traditions, see Book 1, chap. 3, and the essay on The Origin of the Mexican Civilization, at the end of the first book of this History.

nal proprietors of the land. They had occupied it but a few ages, and had been led there by a great Being, who, after giving them laws and ruling over the nation for a time, had withdrawn to the regions where the sun rises. He had declared, on his departure, that he or his descendants would again visit them and resume his empire.[39] The wonderful deeds of the Spaniards, their fair complexions, and the quarter whence they came, all showed they were his descendants. If Montezuma had resisted their visit to his capital, it was because he had heard such accounts of their cruelties,— that they sent the lightning to consume his people, or crushed them to pieces under the hard feet of the ferocious animals on which they rode. He was now convinced that these were idle tales; that the Spaniards were kind and generous in their natures; they were mortals, of a different race, indeed, from the Aztecs, wiser, and more valiant,— and for this he honored them.

"You, too," he added, with a smile, "have been told, perhaps, that I am a god, and dwell in palaces of gold and silver.[40] But you see it is false. My houses, though large, are of stone and wood like those of others; and as to my body," he said, baring his tawny arm, "you see it is flesh and bone

[39] "E siempre hemos tenido, que de los que de él descendiessen habian de venir á sojuzgar esta tierra, y á nosotros como á sus Vasallos." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 81.

[40] "Y luego el Monteçuma dixo riendo, porque en todo era muy regozijado en su hablar de gran señor: Malinche, bien sé que te han dicho essos de Tlascala, con quien tanta amistad aueis tomado, que yo que soy como Dios, ó Teule, que quanto ay en mis casas es todo oro, é plata, y piedras ricas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.

like yours. It is true, I have a great empire inherited from my ancestors; lands, and gold, and silver. But your sovereign beyond the waters is, I know, the rightful lord of all. I rule in his name. You, Malinche, are his ambassador; you and your brethren shall share these things with me. Rest now from your labors. You are here in your own dwellings, and everything shall be provided for your subsistence. I will see that your wishes shall be obeyed in the same way as my own." [41] As the monarch concluded these words, a few natural tears suffused his eyes, while the image of ancient independence, perhaps, flitted across his mind.[42]

Cortés, while he encouraged the idea that his own sovereign was the great Being indicated by Montezuma, endeavored to comfort the monarch by the assurance that his master had no desire to interfere with his authority, otherwise than, out of pure concern for his welfare, to effect his conversion and that of his people to Christianity. Before the emperor dismissed his visitors he consulted his munificent spirit, as usual, by distributing rich

[41] "E por tanto Vos sed cierto, que os obedecerémos, y ternémos por señor en lugar de esse gran señor que decis, y que en ello no habia falta, ni engaño alguno; é bien podeis en toda la tierra, digo, que en la que yo en mi Señorío poseo, mandar á vuestra voluntad, porque será obedecido y fecho, y todo lo que nosotros tenemos es para lo que Vos de ello quisieredes disponer." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.

[42] Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 66.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Gonzalo de las Casas, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.—Cortés, in his brief notes of this proceeding, speaks only of the interview with Montezuma in the Spanish quarters, which he makes the scene of the preceding dialogue. Bernal Diaz transfers this to the subsequent meeting in the palace. In the only fact of importance, the dialogue itself, both substantially agree.

stuffs and trinkets of gold among them, so that the poorest soldier, says Bernal Diaz, one of the party, received at least two heavy collars of the precious metal for his share. The iron hearts of the Spaniards were touched with the emotion displayed by Montezuma, as well as by his princely spirit of liberality. As they passed him, the cavaliers, with bonnet in hand, made him the most profound obeisance, and "on the way home," continues the same chronicler, "we could discourse of nothing but the gentle breeding and courtesy of the Indian monarch, and of the respect we entertained for him." [43]

Speculations of a graver complexion must have pressed on the mind of the general, as he saw around him the evidences of a civilization, and consequently power, for which even the exaggerated reports of the natives—discredited from their apparent exaggeration—had not prepared him. In the pomp and burdensome ceremonial of the court he saw that nice system of subordination and profound reverence for the monarch which characterize the semi-civilized empires of Asia. In the appearance of the capital, its massy yet elegant architecture, its luxurious social accommodations, its activity in trade, he recognized the proofs of the intellectual progress, mechanical skill, and enlarged resources of an old and opulent community; while the swarms in the streets attested the existence of a

[43] "Assí nos despedímos con grandes cortesías dél, y nos fuýmos á nuestros aposentos, é ibamos platicando de la buena manera é criança que en todo tenia, é que nosotros en todo le tuuiessemos mucho acato, é con las gorras de armas colchadas quitadas, quando delante dél passassemos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.

population capable of turning these resources to the best account.

In the Aztec he beheld a being unlike either the rude republican Tlascalan or the effeminate Cholulan, but combining the courage of the one with the cultivation of the other. He was in the heart of a great capital, which seemed like an extensive fortification, with its dikes and its draw-bridges, where every house might be easily converted into a castle. Its insular position removed it from the continent, from which, at the mere nod of the sovereign, all communication might be cut off, and the whole warlike population be at once precipitated on him and his handful of followers. What could superior science avail against such odds? [44]

As to the subversion of Montezuma's empire, now that he had seen him in his capital, it must have seemed a more doubtful enterprise than ever. The recognition which the Aztec prince had made of the feudal supremacy, if I may so say, of the Spanish sovereign, was not to be taken too literally. Whatever show of deference he might be disposed to pay the latter under the influence of his present—perhaps temporary—delusion, it was not to be supposed that he would so easily relinquish his actual power and possessions, or that his people would consent to it. Indeed, his sensitive appre-

[44] "Y assí," says Toribio de Benavente, "estaba tan fuerte esta ciudad, que parecia no bastar poder humano para ganarla; porque ademas de su fuerza y municion que tenia, era cabeza y Señoría de toda la tierra, y el Señor de ella (Moteczuma) gloriábase en su silla y en la fortaleza de su ciudad, y en la muchedumbre de sus vassallos." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.

hensions in regard to this very subject, on the coming of the Spaniards, were sufficient proof of the tenacity with which he clung to his authority. It is true that Cortés had a strong lever for future operations in the superstitious reverence felt for himself both by prince and people. It was undoubtedly his policy to maintain this sentiment unimpaired in both, as far as possible.[45] But, before settling any plan of operations, it was necessary to make himself personally acquainted with the topography and local advantages of the capital, the character of its population, and the real nature and amount of its resources. With this view, he asked the emperor's permission to visit the principal public edifices.

[45] "Many are of opinion," says Father Acosta, "that, if the Spaniards had continued the course they began, they might easily have disposed of Montezuma and his kingdom, and introduced the law of Christ, without much bloodshed." Lib. 7, cap. 25.

Antonio de Herrera, the celebrated chronicler of the Indies, was born of a respectable family at Cuella, in Old Spain, in 1549. After passing through the usual course of academic discipline in his own country, he went to Italy, to which land of art and letters the Spanish youth of that time frequently resorted to complete their education. He there became acquainted with Vespasian Gonzaga, brother of the duke of Mantua, and entered into his service. He continued with this prince after he was made Viceroy of Navarre, and was so highly regarded by him, that, on his death-bed, Gonzaga earnestly commended him to the protection of Philip the Second. This penetrating monarch soon discerned the excellent qualities of Herrera, and raised him to the post of Historiographer of the Indies,—an office for which Spain is indebted to Philip. Thus provided with a liberal salary, and with every facility for pursuing the historical researches to which his inclination led him, Herrera's days glided peacefully away in the steady, but silent, occupations of a man of letters. He continued to hold the office of historian of the colonies through Philip the Second's reign, and under his successors, Philip the Third and the Fourth; till in 1625 he died at the advanced

age of seventy-six, leaving behind him a high character for intellectual and moral worth.

Herrera wrote several works, chiefly historical. The most important, that on which his reputation rests, is his *Historia general de las Indias occidentales.* It extends from the year 1492, the time of the discovery of America, to 1554, and is divided into eight decades. Four of them were published in 1601, and the remaining four in 1615, making in all five volumes in folio. The work was subsequently republished in 1730, and has been translated into most of the languages of Europe. The English translator, Stevens, has taken great liberties with his original, in the way of abridgment and omission, but the execution of his work is, on the whole, superior to that of most of the old English versions of the Castilian chroniclers.

Herrera's vast subject embraces the whole colonial empire of Spain in the New World. The work is thrown into the form of annals, and the multifarious occurrences in the distant regions of which he treats are all marshalled with exclusive reference to their chronology, and made to move together *pari passu.* By means of this tasteless arrangement the thread of interest is perpetually snapped, the reader is hurried from one scene to another, without the opportunity of completing his survey of any. His patience is exhausted and his mind perplexed with partial and scattered glimpses, instead of gathering new light as he advances from the skilful development of a continuous and well-digested narrative. This is the great defect of a plan founded on a slavish adherence to chronology. The defect becomes more serious when the work, as in the present instance, is of vast compass and embraces a great variety of details having little relation to each other. In such a work we feel the superiority of a plan like that which Robertson has pursued in his "History of America," where every subject is allowed to occupy its own independent place, proportioned to its importance, and thus to make a distinct and individual impression on the reader.

Herrera's position gave him access to the official returns from the colonies, state papers, and whatever documents existed in the public offices for the illustration of the colonial history. Among these sources of information were some manuscripts, with which it is not now easy to meet; as, for example, the memorial of Alonso de Ojeda, one of the followers of Cortés, which has eluded my researches both in Spain and Mexico. Other writings, as those of Father Sahagun, of much importance in the history of Indian civilization, were unknown to the historian. Of such manuscripts as fell into his hands, Herrera made the freest use. From the writings of Las Casas, in particular, he borrowed without ceremony. The bishop had left orders that his "History of the Indies" should not be published till at least forty years after his death. Before that period had elapsed Herrera had entered on his labors, and, as he had access to the papers of Las Casas, he availed himself of it to transfer whole pages, nay, chapters, of his narrative in the most unscrupulous

manner to his own work. In doing this, he made a decided improvement on the manner of his original, reduced his cumbrous and entangled sentences to pure Castilian, omitted his turgid declamation and his unreasonable invectives. But, at the same time, he also excluded the passages that bore hardest on the conduct of his countrymen, and those bursts of indignant eloquence which showed a moral sensibility in the Bishop of Chiapa that raised him so far above his age. By this sort of metempsychosis, if one may so speak, by which the letter and not the spirit of the good missionary was transferred to Herrera's pages, he rendered the publication of Las Casas' history, in some measure, superfluous; and this circumstance has, no doubt, been one reason for its having been so long detained in manuscript.

Yet, with every allowance for the errors incident to rapid composition, and to the pedantic chronological system pursued by Herrera, his work must be admitted to have extraordinary merit. It displays to the reader the whole progress of Spanish conquest and colonization in the New World for the first sixty years after the discovery. The individual actions of his complicated story, though unskilfully grouped together, are unfolded in a pure and simple style, well suited to the gravity of his subject. If at first sight he may seem rather too willing to magnify the merits of the early discoverers and to throw a veil over their excesses, it may be pardoned, as flowing, not from moral insensibility, but from the patriotic sentiment which made him desirous, as far as might be, to wipe away every stain from the escutcheon of his nation, in the proud period of her renown. It is natural that the Spaniard who dwells on this period should be too much dazzled by the display of her gigantic efforts, scrupulously to weigh their moral character, or the merits of the cause in which they were made. Yet Herrera's national partiality never makes him the apologist of crime; and, with the allowances fairly to be conceded, he may be entitled to the praise so often given him of integrity and candor.

It must not be forgotten that, in addition to the narrative of the early discoveries of the Spaniards, Herrera has brought together a vast quantity of information in respect to the institutions and usages of the Indian nations, collected from the most authentic sources. This gives his work a completeness beyond what is to be found in any other on the same subject. It is, indeed, a noble monument of sagacity and erudition; and the student of history, and still more the historical compiler, will find himself unable to advance a single step among the early colonial settlements of the New World without reference to the pages of Herrera.

Another writer on Mexico, frequently consulted in the course of the present narrative, is Toribio de Benavente, or *Motolinia,* as he is still more frequently called, from his Indian cognomen. He was one of the twelve Franciscan missionaries who, at the request of Cortés, were sent out to New Spain immediately after the Conquest,

in 1523. Toribio's humble attire, naked feet, and, in short, the poverty-stricken aspect which belongs to his order, frequently drew from the natives the exclamation of *Motolinia,* or "poor man." It was the first Aztec word the signification of which the missionary learned, and he was so much pleased with it, as intimating his own condition, that he henceforth assumed it as his name. Toribio employed himself zealously with his brethren in the great object of their mission. He travelled on foot over various parts of Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Wherever he went, he spared no pains to wean the natives from their dark idolatry, and to pour into their minds the light of revelation. He showed even a tender regard for their temporal as well as spiritual wants, and Bernal Diaz testifies that he has known him to give away his own robe to clothe a destitute and suffering Indian. Yet this charitable friar, so meek and conscientious in the discharge of his Christian duties, was one of the fiercest opponents of Las Casas, and sent home a remonstrance against the Bishop of Chiapa, couched in terms the most opprobrious and sarcastic. It has led the bishop's biographer, Quintana, to suggest that the friar's threadbare robe may have covered somewhat of worldly pride and envy. It may be so. Yet it may also lead us to distrust the discretion of Las Casas himself, who could carry measures with so rude a hand as to provoke such unsparing animadversions from his fellow-laborers in the vineyard.

Toribio was made guardian of a Franciscan convent at Tezcuco. In this situation he continued active in good works, and at this place, and in his different pilgrimages, is stated to have baptized more than four hundred thousand natives. His efficacious piety was attested by various miracles. One of the most remarkable was when the Indians were suffering from great drought, which threatened to annihilate the approaching harvests. The good father recommended a solemn procession of the natives to the church of Santa Cruz, with prayers and a vigorous flagellation. The effect was soon visible in such copious rains as entirely relieved the people from their apprehensions, and in the end made the season uncommonly fruitful. The counterpart to this prodigy was afforded a few years later, while the country was laboring under excessive rains; when, by a similar remedy, the evil was checked, and a like propitious influence exerted on the season as before. The exhibition of such miracles greatly edified the people, says his biographer, and established them firmly in the Faith. Probably Toribio's exemplary life and conversation, so beautifully illustrating the principles which he taught, did quite as much for the good cause as his miracles.

Thus passing his days in the peaceful and pious avocations of the Christian missionary, the worthy ecclesiastic was at length called from the scene of his earthly pilgrimage, in what year is uncertain, but at an advanced age, for he survived all the little band of missionaries who had accompanied him to New Spain. He died in the convent of San Francisco at Mexico, and his panegyric is thus em-

phatically pronounced by Torquemada, a brother of his own order: "He was a truly apostolic man, a great teacher of Christianity, beautiful in the ornament of every virtue, jealous of the glory of God, a friend of evangelical poverty, most true to the observance of his monastic rule, and zealous in the conversion of the heathen."

Father Toribio's long personal intercourse with the Mexicans, and the knowledge of their language, which he was at much pains to acquire, opened to him all the sources of information respecting them and their institutions, which existed at the time of the Conquest. The results he carefully digested in the work so often cited in these pages, the *Historia de los Indios de Nueva-España,* making a volume of manuscript in folio. It is divided into three parts. 1. The religion, rites, and sacrifices of the Aztecs. 2. Their conversion to Christianity, and their manner of celebrating the festivals of the Church. 3. The genius and character of the nation, their chronology and astrology, together with notices of the principal cities and the staple productions of the country. Notwithstanding the methodical arrangement of the work, it is written in the rambling, unconnected manner of a commonplace-book, into which the author has thrown at random his notices of such matters as most interested him in his survey of the country. His own mission is ever before his eyes, and the immediate topic of discussion, of whatever nature it may be, is at once abandoned to exhibit an event or an anecdote that can illustrate his ecclesiastical labors. The most startling occurrences are recorded with all the credulous gravity which is so likely to win credit from the vulgar; and a stock of miracles is duly attested by the historian, of more than sufficient magnitude to supply the wants of the infant religious communities of New Spain.

Yet amidst this mass of pious *incredibilia* the inquirer into the Aztec antiquities will find much curious and substantial information. Toribio's long and intimate relations with the natives put him in possession of their whole stock of theology and science; and as his manner, though somewhat discursive, is plain and unaffected, there is no obscurity in the communication of his ideas. His inferences, colored by the superstitions of the age and the peculiar nature of his profession, may be often received with distrust. But, as his integrity and his means of information were unquestionable, his work becomes of the first authority in relation to the antiquities of the country, and its condition at the period of the Conquest. As an educated man, he was enabled to penetrate deeper than the illiterate soldiers of Cortés, men given to action rather than to speculation. Yet Toribio's manuscript, valuable as it is to the historian, has never been printed, and has too little in it of popular interest, probably, ever to be printed. Much that it contains has found its way, in various forms, into subsequent compilations. The work itself is very rarely to be found. Dr. Robertson had a copy, as it seems from the catalogue of MSS. published with his "History of America;"

though the author's name is not prefixed to it. There is no copy, I believe, in the library of the Academy of History at Madrid; and for that in my possession I am indebted to the kindness of that curious bibliographer, Mr. O. Rich, now consul for the United States at Minorca.

Pietro Martire de Angleria, or Peter Martyr, as he is called by English writers, belonged to an ancient and highly respectable family of Arona in the north of Italy. In 1487 he was induced by the count of Tendilla, the Spanish ambassador at Rome, to return with him to Castile. He was graciously received by Queen Isabella, always desirous to draw around her enlightened foreigners, who might exercise a salutary influence on the rough and warlike nobility of Castile. Martyr, who had been educated for the Church, was persuaded by the queen to undertake the instruction of the young nobles at the court. In this way he formed an intimacy with some of the most illustrious men of the nation, who seem to have cherished a warm personal regard for him through the remainder of his life. He was employed by the Catholic sovereigns in various concerns of public interest, was sent on a mission to Egypt, and was subsequently raised to a distinguished post in the cathedral of Granada. But he continued to pass much of his time at court, where he enjoyed the confidence of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of their successor, Charles the Fifth, till in 1525 he died, at the age of seventy.

Martyr's character combined qualities not often found in the same individual,—an ardent love of letters, with a practical sagacity that can only result from familiarity with men and affairs. Though passing his days in the gay and dazzling society of the capital, he preserved the simple tastes and dignified temper of a philosopher. His correspondence, as well as his more elaborate writings, if the term elaborate can be applied to any of his writings, manifests an enlightened and oftentimes independent spirit; though one would have been better pleased had he been sufficiently independent to condemn the religious intolerance of the government. But Martyr, though a philosopher, was enough of a courtier to look with a lenient eye on the errors of princes. Though deeply imbued with the learning of antiquity, and a scholar at heart, he had none of the feelings of the recluse, but took the most lively interest in the events that were passing around him. His various writings, including his copious correspondence, are for this reason the very best mirror of the age in which he lived.

His inquisitive mind was particularly interested by the discoveries that were going on in the New World. He was allowed to be present at the sittings of the Council of the Indies when any communication of importance was made to it; and he was subsequently appointed a member of that body. All that related to the colonies passed through his hands. The correspondence of Columbus, Cortés, and the other discoverers with the court of Castile was submitted to his perusal. He became personally acquainted with these illustrious

persons on their return home, and frequently, as we find from his letters, entertained them at his own table. With these advantages, his testimony becomes but one degree removed from that of the actors themselves in the great drama. In one respect it is of a higher kind, since it is free from the prejudice and passion which a personal interest in events is apt to beget. The testimony of Martyr is that of a philosopher, taking a clear and comprehensive survey of the ground, with such lights of previous knowledge to guide him as none of the actual discoverers and conquerors could pretend to. It is true, this does not prevent his occasionally falling into errors; the errors of credulity,—not, however, of the credulity founded on superstition, but that which arises from the uncertain nature of the subject, where phenomena so unlike anything with which he had been familiar were now first disclosed by the revelation of an unknown world.

He may be more fairly charged with inaccuracies of another description, growing out of haste and inadvertence of composition. But even here we should be charitable. For he confesses his sins with a candor that disarms criticism. In truth, he wrote rapidly, and on the spur of the moment, as occasion served. He shrunk from the publication of his writings, when it was urged on him, and his Decades *De Orbe Novo,* in which he embodied the results of his researches in respect to the American discoveries, were not published entire till after his death. The most valuable and complete edition of this work—the one referred to in the present pages—is the edition of Hakluyt, published at Paris in 1587.

Martyr's works are all in Latin, and that not of the purest; a circumstance rather singular, considering his familiarity with the classic models of antiquity. Yet he evidently handled the dead languages with the same facility as the living. Whatever defects may be charged on his manner, in the selection and management of his topics he shows the superiority of his genius. He passes over the trivial details which so often encumber the literal narratives of the Spanish voyagers, and fixes his attention on the great results of their discoveries,—the products of the country, the history and institutions of the races, their character and advance in civilization. In one respect his writings are of peculiar value. They show the state of feeling which existed at the Castilian court during the progress of discovery. They furnish, in short, the reverse side of the picture; and, when we have followed the Spanish conquerors in their wonderful career of adventure in the New World, we have only to turn to the pages of Martyr to find the impression produced by them on the enlightened minds of the Old. Such a view is necessary to the completeness of the historical picture.

If the reader is curious to learn more of this estimable scholar, he will find the particulars given in "The History of Ferdinand and Isabella" (Part I. chap. 14, Postscript, and chap. 19), for the illustration of whose reign his voluminous correspondence furnishes the most authentic materials.

BOOK IV

RESIDENCE IN MEXICO

MAP OF THE
Valley of Mexico.
CONQUEST.
Tolocan
Toluca
Xochimilco
Xochicalco
Cuitlahuac
Lake of Chalco
Chalco
Mizquiz
Ajotzinco
Cruz del Marques
Amaquemecan
Mecameca
Popocatepetl
Jacapichtla
Huaxtepec
Quauhnahuac
Cuernavaca
Jantepec
Long W from
Greenwich

Lake of Tzompanco
Xaltocan
LAKE OF XALTOCAN
Teotihuacan
Otompan
Otumba
Quauhtitlan
Tepechpan
Acolman
Tanepantla
Tenajoccan
Tenayuca
Tezcotzinco
TEZCUCO
Cerro de Otoncalpolco
Azcapozalco
Tepejacac
TLACOPAN
Tacuba
Popotla
MEXICO
Tenochtitlan
Chapoltepec
LAKE OF TEZCUCO
Canal del Marques
Xoloc
Iztapalapan
Coatepec
Cojohuacan
Mexicaltzinco
Causeway
Huitzilopochco
Colhuacan

BOOK IV

RESIDENCE IN MEXICO

CHAPTER I

TEZCUCAN LAKE—DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPITAL—PALACES AND MUSEUMS—ROYAL HOUSEHOLD—MONTEZUMA'S WAY OF LIFE

1519

THE ancient city of Mexico covered the same spot occupied by the modern capital. The great causeways touched it in the same points; the streets ran in much the same direction, nearly from north to south and from east to west; the cathedral in the *plaza mayor* stands on the same ground that was covered by the temple of the Aztec war-god; and the four principal quarters of the town are still known among the Indians by their ancient names. Yet an Aztec of the days of Montezuma, could he behold the modern metropolis, which has risen with such phœnix-like splendor from the ashes of the old, would not recognize its site as that of his own Tenochtitlan. For the latter was encompassed by the salt floods of Tezcuco, which flowed in ample canals through every part of the

city; while the Mexico of our day stands high and dry on the main land, nearly a league distant, at its centre, from the water. The cause of this apparent change in its position is the diminution of the lake, which, from the rapidity of evaporation in these elevated regions, had become perceptible before the Conquest, but which has since been greatly accelerated by artificial causes.[1]

The average level of the Tezcucan lake, at the present day, is but four feet lower than the great square of Mexico.[2] It is considerably lower than the other great basins of water which are found in the Valley. In the heavy swell sometimes caused by long and excessive rains, these latter reservoirs anciently overflowed into the Tezcuco, which, rising with the accumulated volume of waters, burst through the dikes, and, pouring into the streets of the capital, buried the lower part of the buildings under a deluge. This was comparatively a light evil when the houses stood on piles so elevated that boats might pass under them; when the streets were canals, and the ordinary mode of communication was by water. But it became more disastrous as these canals, filled up with the rubbish of the ruined Indian city, were supplanted by streets of solid

[1] The lake, it seems, had perceptibly shrunk before the Conquest, from the testimony of Motolinia, who entered the country soon after. Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

[2] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 95.—Cortés supposed there were regular tides in this lake. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 101.) This sorely puzzles the learned Martyr (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3); as it has more than one philosopher since, whom it has led to speculate on a subterraneous communication with the ocean! What the general called "tides" was probably the periodical swells caused by the prevalence of certain regular winds.

earth, and the foundations of the capital were gradually reclaimed from the watery element. To obviate this alarming evil, the famous drain of Huehuetoca was opened, at an enormous cost, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and Mexico, after repeated inundations, has been at length placed above the reach of the flood.[3] But what was gained to the useful, in this case, as in some others, has been purchased at the expense of the beautiful. By this shrinking of the waters, the bright towns and hamlets once washed by them have been removed some miles into the interior, while a barren strip of land, ghastly from the incrustation of salts formed on the surface, has taken the place of the glowing vegetation which once enamelled the borders of the lake, and of the dark groves of oak, cedar, and sycamore which threw their broad shadows over its bosom.

The *chinampas,* that archipelago of wandering islands, to which our attention was drawn in the last chapter, have, also, nearly disappeared. These had their origin in the detached masses of earth, which, loosening from the shores, were still held together by the fibrous roots with which they were penetrated. The primitive Aztecs, in their poverty of land, availed themselves of the hint thus afforded by nature. They constructed rafts of reeds, rushes, and other fibrous materials, which, tightly knit together, formed a sufficient basis for the sedi-

[3] Humboldt has given a minute account of this tunnel, which he pronounces one of the most stupendous hydraulic works in existence, and the completion of which, in its present form, does not date earlier than the latter part of the eighteenth century. See his Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 105, et seq.

ment that they drew up from the bottom of the lake. Gradually islands were formed, two or three hundred feet in length, and three or four feet in depth, with a rich stimulated soil, on which the economical Indian raised his vegetables and flowers for the markets of Tenochtitlan. Some of these *chinampas* were even firm enough to allow the growth of small trees, and to sustain a hut for the residence of the person that had charge of it, who with a long pole, resting on the sides or the bottom of the shallow basin, could change the position of his little territory at pleasure, which with its rich freight of vegetable stores was seen moving like some enchanted island over the water.[4]

The ancient dikes were three in number. That of Iztapalapan, by which the Spaniards entered, approaching the city from the south. That of Tepejacac, on the north, which, continuing the principal street, might be regarded, also, as a continuation of the first causeway. Lastly, the dike of Tlacopan, connecting the island-city with the continent on the west. This last causeway, memorable for the disastrous retreat of the Spaniards, was about two miles in length. They were all built in the same substantial manner, of lime and stone, were defended by draw-bridges, and were wide enough for ten or twelve horsemen to ride abreast.[5]

[4] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 87, et seq.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 153.

[5] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Cortés, indeed, speaks of four causeways. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 102.) He may have reckoned an arm of the southern one leading to Cojohuacan, or possibly the great aqueduct of Chapoltepec.

The rude founders of Tenochtitlan built their frail tenements of reeds and rushes on the group of small islands in the western part of the lake. In process of time, these were supplanted by more substantial buildings. A quarry in the neighborhood, of a red porous amygdaloid, *tetzontli,* was opened, and a light, brittle stone drawn from it and wrought with little difficulty. Of this their edifices were constructed, with some reference to architectural solidity, if not elegance. Mexico, as already noticed, was the residence of the great chiefs, whom the sovereign encouraged, or rather compelled, from obvious motives of policy, to spend part of the year in the capital. It was also the temporary abode of the great lords of Tezcuco and Tlacopan, who shared, nominally at least, the sovereignty of the empire.[6] The mansions of these dignitaries, and of the principal nobles, were on a scale of rude magnificence corresponding with their state. They were low, indeed,—seldom of more than one floor, never exceeding two. But they spread over a wide extent of ground, were arranged in a quadrangular form, with a court in the centre, and were surrounded by porticoes embellished with porphyry and jasper, easily found in the neighborhood, while not unfrequently a fountain of crystal water in the centre shed a grateful coolness through the air. The dwellings of the common people were also placed on foundations of stone, which rose to the height of a few feet and were then succeeded by courses of unbaked bricks, crossed occasionally by wooden

[6] *Ante,* vol. i. p. 23.

rafters.[7] Most of the streets were mean and narrow. Some few, however, were wide and of great length. The principal street, conducting from the great southern causeway, penetrated in a straight line the whole length of the city, and afforded a noble vista, in which the long lines of low stone edifices were broken occasionally by intervening gardens, rising on terraces and displaying all the pomp of Aztec horticulture.

The great streets, which were coated with a hard cement, were intersected by numerous canals. Some of these were flanked by a solid way, which served as a foot-walk for passengers, and as a landing-place where boats might discharge their cargoes. Small buildings were erected at intervals, as stations for the revenue officers who collected the duties on different articles of merchandise. The canals were traversed by numerous bridges, many of which could be raised, affording the means of cutting off communication between different parts of the city.[8]

From the accounts of the ancient capital, one is reminded of those aquatic cities in the Old World,

[7] Martyr gives a particular account of these dwellings, which shows that even the poorer classes were comfortably lodged. "Populares vero domus cingulo virili tenus lapideæ sunt et ipsæ, ob lacunæ incrementum per fluxum aut fluviorum in ea labentium alluvies. Super fundamentis illis magnis, lateribus tum coctis, tum æstivo sole siccatis, immixtis trabibus reliquam molem construunt; uno sunt communes domus contentæ tabulato. In solo parum hospitantur propter humiditatem, tecta non tegulis sed bitumine quodam terreo vestiunt; ad solem captandum commodior est ille modus, breviore tempore consumi debere credendum est." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[8] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 108.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10, 11.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

the positions of which have been selected from similar motives of economy and defence; above all, of Venice,[9]—if it be not rash to compare the rude architecture of the American Indian with the marble palaces and temples—alas, how shorn of their splendor!—which crowned the once proud mistress of the Adriatic.[10] The example of the metropolis was soon followed by the other towns in the vicinity. Instead of resting their foundations on *terra firma,* they were seen advancing far into the lake, the shallow waters of which in some parts do not exceed four feet in depth.[11] Thus an easy means of intercommunication was opened, and the surface of this inland "sea," as Cortés styles it, was darkened by thousands of canoes[12]—an In-

[9] Martyr was struck with the resemblance. "Uti de illustrissima civitate Venetiarum legitur, ad tumulum in ea sinus Adriatici parte visum, fuisse constructam." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[10] May we not apply, without much violence, to the Aztec capital, Giovanni della Casa's spirited sonnet, contrasting the origin of Venice with its meridian glory?

"Questi Palazzi e queste logge or colte
D'ostro, di marmo e di figure elette,
Fur poche e basse case insieme accolte
Deserti lidi e povere Isolette.
Ma genti ardite d'ogni vizio sciolte
Premeano il mar con picciole barchette,
Che qui non per domar provincie molte,
Ma fuggir servitù s' eran ristrette
Non era ambizion ne' petti loro;
Ma 'l mentire abborrian più che la morte,
Nè vi regnava ingorda fame d' oro.
Se 'l Ciel v' ha dato piu beata sorte,
Non sien quelle virtù che tanto onoro,
Dalle nuove ricchezze oppresse e morte."

[11] "Le lac de Tezcuco n'a généralement que trois à cinq mètres de profondeur. Dans quelques endroits le fond se trouve même déjà à moins d'un mètre." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 49.

[12] "Y cada dia entran gran multitud de Indios cargados de bastimentos y tributos, así por tierra como por agua, en acales ó barcas, que *en lengua de las Islas llaman Canoas.*" Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

dian term—industriously engaged in the traffic between these little communities. How gay and picturesque must have been the aspect of the lake in those days, with its shining cities, and flowering islets rocking, as it were, at anchor on the fair bosom of its waters!

The population of Tenochtitlan at the time of the Conquest is variously stated. No contemporary writer estimates it at less than sixty thousand houses, which, by the ordinary rules of reckoning,*

* [This estimate is of course erroneous. "The ordinary rules of reckoning" cannot be applied to people living as did the Mexicans. The word *vecinos* means not only householders, as pointed out in the author's note, but also inhabitants. The translator who rendered the "Anonymous Conqueror" into Italian made no blunder when he used the word *habitatori*. Morgan (Ancient Society, p. 195) thinks the population was not more than 30,000, and asks "how a barbarous people without flocks and herds, and without field agriculture, could have sustained in equal areas a larger number of inhabitants than a civilized people can now maintain armed with these advantages." (London at that time may have contained 145,000 inhabitants.) But Morgan's estimate is without question too low. Zuazo and the Anonymous Conqueror were more nearly right in fixing, the population of the city at 60,000. There could not possibly have been room enough for sixty thousand Aztec houses in a city of which the circumference was less than three leagues. (No one makes it at any time to have been more than four leagues in circumference.) The houses in which the higher officials dwelt were spread over a wide extent of ground, were low, "seldom of more than one floor, never exceeding two." (*Ante*, p. 285.) Public buildings and pleasure grounds took up much space. The great market-place, *tianguez*, was "thrice as large as the celebrated square of Salamanca" (p. 312). No one states the number of visitors at less than 40,000 (p. 317). (According to Ford, Handbook of Spain, the Plaza at Salamanca was the largest square in Spain. From 16,000 to 20,000 spectators could be accommodated at the bull-fights which took place there.) The temple area also was enormous. On a map of the city of Mexico, in the edition of the Letters of Cortés published at Nuremberg, 1524, the temple space is twenty times as great as that given to the market-place. The large number of visitors to the Plaza on market days is easily accounted for if we compare the thronged afternoon streets in the shopping districts of any large city with those same

would give three hundred thousand souls.[13] If a dwelling often contained, as is asserted, several families, it would swell the amount considerably higher.[14] Nothing is more uncertain than estimates of numbers among barbarous communities, who necessarily live in a more confused and promiscuous manner than civilized, and among whom no regular system is adopted for ascertaining the population. The concurrent testimony of the Conquerors; the extent of the city, which was said to be nearly three leagues in circumference;[15] the immense size of its great market-place; the long lines of edifices, vestiges of whose ruins may still

[13] "Esta la cibdad de Méjico ó *Teneztutan,* que será de sesenta mil vecinos." (Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) "Tenustitanam ipsam inquiunt sexaginta circiter esse millium domorum." (Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.) "Era Méjico, quando Cortés entró, pueblo de sesenta mil casas." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 78.) Toribio says, vaguely, "Los moradores y gente era innumerable." (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.) The Italian translation of the "Anonymous Conqueror," who survives only in translation, says, indeed, "meglio di sessanta mila *habitatori*" (Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309); owing, probably, to a blunder in rendering the word *vecinos,* the ordinary term in Spanish statistics, which, signifying *householders,* corresponds with the Italian *fuochi.* See, also, Clavigero. (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 86, nota.) Robertson rests *exclusively* on this Italian translation for his estimate. (History of America, vol. ii. p. 281.) He cites, indeed, two other authorities in the same connection; Cortés, who says nothing of the population, and Herrera, who confirms the popular statement of "sesenta mil casas." (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.) The fact is of some importance.

[14] "In the smallest houses, with few exceptions, two, four, and even six families resided together." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.

[15] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

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streets deserted at night when the visitors have returned to their homes. There were no shops in the Aztec capital and all the buying was done in the *tianguez.*—M.]

be found in the suburbs, miles from the modern city;[16] the fame of the metropolis throughout Anahuac, which, however, could boast many large and populous places; lastly, the economical husbandry and the ingenious contrivances to extract aliment from the most unpromising sources,[17]—all attest a numerous population, far beyond that of the present capital.[18]

[16] "C'est sur le chemin qui mène à Tanepantla et aux Ahuahuetes que l'on peut marcher plus d'une heure entre les ruines de l'ancienne ville. On y reconnaît, ainsi que sur la route de Tacuba et d'Iztapalapan, combien Mexico, rebâti par Cortéz, est plus petit que l'était Tenochtitlan sous le dernier des Montezuma. L'énorme grandeur du marché de Tlatelolco, dont on reconnaît encore les limites, prouve combien la population de l'ancienne ville doit avoir été considérable." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 43.

[17] A common food with the lower classes was a glutinous scum found in the lakes, which they made into a sort of cake, having a savor not unlike cheese. (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.)—[This "scum" consists in fact of the eggs of aquatic insects, with which cakes are made, in the same manner as with the spawn of fishes. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 366.] *

[18] One is confirmed in this inference by comparing the two maps at the end of the first edition of Bullock's "Mexico;" one of the modern city, the other of the ancient, taken from Boturini's museum, and showing its regular arrangement of streets and canals; as regular, indeed, as the squares on a chess-board.†

* [Little can be inferred, in regard to the difference of population, from the use of the *ahuähutle,* as these cakes are called, since it is still a favorite article of food at Tezcuco, where the eggs are found in great abundance, and sold in the market both in the prepared state and in lumps as collected at the edge of the lake. "The flies which produce these eggs are called by the Mexicans *axayacatl,* or *water-face,—Corixa femorata,* and *Notonecta unifasciata,* according to MM. Meneville and Virlet d'Aoust." Tylor, Anahuac, p. 156.—K.]

† [The doubts so often excited by the descriptions of ancient Mexico in the accounts of the Spanish discoverers, like the similar incredulity formerly entertained in regard to the narrations of Herodotus, are dispelled by a critical investigation in conjunction with the results of modern explorations. Among recent travellers, Mr. Edward B. Tylor, whose learning and acumen have been displayed in

A careful police provided for the health and cleanliness of the city. A thousand persons are said to have been daily employed in watering and sweeping the streets,[19] so that a man—to borrow the language of an old Spaniard—"could walk through them with as little danger of soiling his feet as his hands." [20] The water, in a city washed

[19] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 274.

[20] "Era tan barrido y el suelo tan asentado y liso, que aunque la planta del pie fuera tan delicada como la de la mano no recibiera el

various ethnological studies, is entitled to especial confidence. In company with Mr. Christy, the well-known collector, he examined the ploughed fields in the neighborhood of Mexico, making repeated trials whether it was possible to stand in any spot where no relic of the former population was within reach. "But this," he says, "we could not do. Everywhere the ground was full of unglazed pottery and obsidian." "We noticed by the sides of the road, and where ditches had been cut, numbers of old Mexican stone floors covered with stucco. The earth has accumulated above them to the depth of two or three feet, so that their position is like that of the Roman pavements so often found in Europe; and we may guess, from what we saw exposed, how great must be the number of such remains still hidden, and how vast a population must once have inhabited this plain, now almost deserted." "When we left England," he adds, "we both doubted the accounts of the historians of the Conquest, believing that they had exaggerated the numbers of the population, and the size of the cities, from a natural desire to make the most of their victories, and to write as wonderful a history as they could, as historians are prone to do. But our examination of Mexican remains soon induced us to withdraw this accusation, and even made us inclined to blame the chroniclers for having had no eyes for the wonderful things that surrounded them. I do not mean by this that we felt inclined to swallow the monstrous exaggeration of Solís and Gomara and other Spanish chroniclers, who seemed to think that it was as easy to say a thousand as a hundred, and that it sounded much better. But when this class of writers are set aside, and the more valuable authorities severely criticised, it does not seem to us that the history thus extracted from these sources is much less reliable than European history of the same period. There is, perhaps, no better way of expressing this opinion than to say that what we saw of Mexico tended generally to confirm Prescott's History of the Conquest, and but seldom to make his statements appear to us improbable." Anahuac, p. 147.—K.]

on all sides by the salt floods, was extremely brackish. A liberal supply of the pure element, however, was brought from Chapoltepec, "the grasshopper's hill," less than a league distant. It was brought through an earthen pipe, along a dike constructed for the purpose. That there might be no failure in so essential an article when repairs were going on, a double course of pipes was laid. In this way a column of water of the size of a man's body was conducted into the heart of the capital, where it fed the fountains and reservoirs of the principal mansions. Openings were made in the aqueduct as it crossed the bridges, and thus a supply was furnished to the canoes below, by means of which it was transported to all parts of the city.[21]

While Montezuma encouraged a taste for architectural magnificence in his nobles, he contributed his own share towards the embellishment of the city. It was in his reign that the famous calendar stone, weighing, probably, in its primitive state, nearly fifty tons, was transported from its native quarry, many leagues distant, to the capital, where it still forms one of the most curious monuments of Aztec science. Indeed, when we reflect on the difficulty of hewing such a stupendous mass from its hard basaltic bed without the aid of iron tools, and that of transporting it such a distance across land and water without the help of animals, we may well feel admiration at the mechanical inge-

pie detrimento ninguno en andar descalzo." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

[21] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 108.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

nuity and enterprise of the people who accomplished it.[22]

Not content with the spacious residence of his father, Montezuma erected another on a yet more magnificent scale. It occupied, as before mentioned, the ground partly covered by the private dwellings on one side of the *plaza mayor* of the modern city. This building, or, as it might more correctly be styled, pile of buildings, spread over an extent of ground so vast that, as one of the Conquerors assures us, its terraced roof might have afforded ample room for thirty knights to run their courses in a regular tourney.[23] I have already noticed its interior decorations, its fanciful draperies, its roofs inlaid with cedar and other odoriferous woods, held together without a nail, and, probably, without a knowledge of the arch,[24] its numerous and spacious apartments, which Cortés, with enthusiastic hyperbole, does not hesitate to declare superior to anything of the kind in Spain.[25]

Adjoining the principal edifice were others, de-

[22] These immense masses, according to Martyr, who gathered his information from eye-witnesses, were transported by means of long files of men, who dragged them with ropes over huge wooden rollers. (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.) It was the manner in which the Egyptians removed their enormous blocks of granite, as appears from numerous reliefs sculptured on their buildings.

[23] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[24] "Ricos edificios," says the Licentiate Zuazo, speaking of the buildings in Anahuac generally, "ecepto que no se halla alguno con *bóveda*." (Carta, MS.) The writer made large and careful observation, the year after the Conquest. His assertion, if it be received, will settle a question much mooted among antiquaries.

[25] "His residence within the city was so marvellous for its beauty and vastness that it seems to me almost impossible to describe it. I shall therefore say no more of it than that there is nothing like it in Spain." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 111.

voted to various objects. One was an armory, filled with the weapons and military dresses worn by the Aztecs, all kept in the most perfect order, ready for instant use. The emperor was himself very expert in the management of the *maquahuitl,* or Indian sword, and took great delight in witnessing athletic exercises and the mimic representation of war by his young nobility. Another building was used as a granary, and others as warehouses for the different articles of food and apparel contributed by the districts charged with the maintenance of the royal household.

There were, also, edifices appropriated to objects of quite another kind. One of these was an immense aviary, in which birds of splendid plumage were assembled from all parts of the empire. Here was the scarlet cardinal, the golden pheasant, the endless parrot-tribe with their rainbow hues (the royal green predominant), and that miniature miracle of nature, the humming-bird, which delights to revel among the honeysuckle bowers of Mexico.[26] Three hundred attendants had charge of this aviary, who made themselves acquainted with the appropriate food of its inmates, oftentimes procured at great cost, and in the moulting

[26] Herrera's account of these feathered insects, if one may so style them, shows the fanciful errors into which even men of science were led in regard to the new tribes of animals discovered in America: "There are some birds in the country of the size of butterflies, with long beaks, brilliant plumage, much esteemed for the curious works made of them. Like the bees, they live on flowers, and the dew which settles on them; and when the rainy season is over, and the dry weather sets in, they fasten themselves to the trees by their beaks and soon die. But in the following year, when the new rains come, they come to life again"! Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 21.

season were careful to collect the beautiful plumage, which, with its many-colored tints, furnished the materials for the Aztec painter.

A separate building was reserved for the fierce birds of prey; the voracious vulture-tribes and eagles of enormous size, whose home was in the snowy solitudes of the Andes. No less than five hundred turkeys,* the cheapest meat in Mexico, were allowed for the daily consumption of these tyrants of the feathered race.

Adjoining this aviary was a menagerie of wild animals, gathered from the mountain forests, and even from the remote swamps of the *tierra caliente*. The resemblance of the different species to those in the Old World, with which no one of them, however, was identical, led to a perpetual confusion in the nomenclature of the Spaniards, as it has since done in that of better-instructed naturalists. The collection was still further swelled by a great number of reptiles and serpents remarkable for their size and venomous qualities, among which the Spaniards beheld the fiery little animal "with the castanets in his tail," the terror of the American wilderness.[27] The serpents were confined in long cages lined with down or feathers, or in troughs of mud and water. The beasts and birds of prey were provided with apartments large enough to allow of

[27] "Pues mas tenian," says the honest Captain Diaz, "en aquella maldita casa muchas Víboras, y Culebras emponçoñadas, que traen en las colas vnos que suenan como cascabeles; estas son las peores Víboras de todas." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

* [The turkey was introduced to Europe from Mexico, as has before been stated.—M.]

their moving about, and secured by a strong lattice-work, through which light and air were freely admitted. The whole was placed under the charge of numerous keepers, who acquainted themselves with the habits of their prisoners and provided for their comfort and cleanliness. With what deep interest would the enlightened naturalist of that day—an Oviedo, or a Martyr, for example—have surveyed this magnificent collection, in which the various tribes which roamed over the Western wilderness, the unknown races of an unknown world, were brought into one view! How would they have delighted to study the peculiarities of these new species, compared with those of their own hemisphere, and thus have risen to some comprehension of the general laws by which Nature acts in all her works! The rude followers of Cortés did not trouble themselves with such refined speculations. They gazed on the spectacle with a vague curiosity not unmixed with awe; and, as they listened to the wild cries of the ferocious animals and the hissings of the serpents, they almost fancied themselves in the infernal regions.[28]

I must not omit to notice a strange collection of human monsters, dwarfs, and other unfortunate persons in whose organization Nature had capriciously deviated from her regular laws. Such hideous anomalies were regarded by the Aztecs as a suitable appendage of state. It is even said

[28] "Digamos aora," exclaims Captain Diaz, "las cosas infernales que hazian, quando bramauan los Tigres y Leones, y aullauan los Adiues y Zorros, y silbauan las Sierpes, era grima oirlo, y parecia infierno." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

they were in some cases the result of artificial means, employed by unnatural parents desirous to secure a provision for their offspring by thus qualifying them for a place in the royal museum![29]

Extensive gardens were spread out around these buildings, filled with fragrant shrubs and flowers, and especially with medicinal plants.[30] No country has afforded more numerous species of these last than New Spain; and their virtues were perfectly understood by the Aztecs, with whom medical botany may be said to have been studied as a science. Amidst this labyrinth of sweet-scented groves and shrubberies, fountains of pure water might be seen throwing up their sparkling jets and scattering refreshing dews over the blossoms. Ten large tanks, well stocked with fish, afforded a retreat on their margins to various tribes of waterfowl, whose habits were so carefully consulted that some of these ponds were of salt water, as that which they most loved to frequent. A tessellated pavement of marble enclosed the ample basins, which were overhung by light and fanciful pavilions, that admitted the perfumed breezes of the gardens, and offered a grateful shelter to the mon-

[29] Ibid., ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 111-113.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11, 46.

[30] Montezuma, according to Gomara, would allow no fruit-trees, considering them as unsuitable to pleasure-grounds. (Crónica, cap. 75.) Toribio says, to the same effect, "Los Indios Señores no procuran árboles de fruta, porque se la traen sus vasallos, sino árboles de floresta, de donde cojan rosas, y adonde se crian aves, así para gozar del canto, como para las tirar con Cerbatana, de la cual son grandes tiradores." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

arch and his mistresses in the sultry heats of summer.[31]

But the most luxurious residence of the Aztec monarch, at that season, was the royal hill of Chapoltepec,—a spot consecrated, moreover, by the ashes of his ancestors. It stood in a westerly direction from the capital, and its base was, in his day, washed by the waters of the Tezcuco. On its lofty crest of porphyritic rock there now stands the magnificent, though desolate, castle erected by the young viceroy Galvez at the close of the seventeenth century.[32] The view from its windows is one of the finest in the environs of Mexico. The landscape is not disfigured here, as in many other quarters, by the white and barren patches, so offensive to the sight; but the eye wanders over an unbroken expanse of meadows and cultivated fields, waving with rich harvests of European grain. Montezuma's gardens stretched for miles around the base of the hill. Two statues of that monarch and his father, cut in bas-relief in the porphyry, were spared till the middle of the last century;[33] and the grounds are still shaded by gigantic cypresses, more than fifty feet in circumference, which were centuries old at the time of the Conquest.[34] The place is now a tangled wilderness of

[31] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11.

[32] [It is used at the present day for a military school. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 370.]

[33] Gomara, a competent critic, who saw them just before their destruction, praises their execution. Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 81–83.—Also, *ante,* vol. i. p. 157.

[34] [Yet the whole of this beautiful grove was not spared. The axes of the Conquerors levelled such of the trees as grew round the foun-

wild shrubs, where the myrtle mingles its dark, glossy leaves with the red berries and delicate foliage of the pepper-tree. Surely there is no spot better suited to awaken meditation on the past; none where the traveller, as he sits under those stately cypresses gray with the moss of ages, can so fitly ponder on the sad destinies of the Indian races and the monarch who once held his courtly revels under the shadow of their branches.

The domestic establishment of Montezuma was on the same scale of barbaric splendor as everything else about him. He could boast as many wives as are found in the harem of an Eastern sultan.[35] They were lodged in their own apartments, and provided with every accommodation, according to their ideas, for personal comfort and cleanliness. They passed their hours in the usual feminine employments of weaving and embroidery, especially in the graceful feather-work, for which such rich materials were furnished by the royal aviaries. They conducted themselves with strict decorum, under the supervision of certain aged females, who acted in the respectable capacity of duennas, in the same manner as in the religious houses attached to the *teocallis*. The palace was supplied with numerous baths, and Montezuma set the example, in his own person, of frequent ablutions. He bathed at least once, and changed his

tain of Chapoltepec and dropped their decayed leaves into its waters. The order of the municipality, dated February 28, 1527, is quoted by Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 290.]

[35] No less than one thousand, if we believe Gomara; who adds the edifying intelligence, "que huvo vez, que tuvo ciento i cincuenta preñadas á un tiempo!"

dress four times, it is said, every day.[36] He never put on the same apparel a second time, but gave it away to his attendants. Queen Elizabeth, with a similar taste for costume, showed a less princely spirit in hoarding her discarded suits. Her wardrobe was, probably, somewhat more costly than that of the Indian emperor.

Besides his numerous female retinue, the halls and antechambers were filled with nobles in constant attendance on his person, who served also as a sort of body-guard. It had been usual for plebeians of merit to fill certain offices in the palace. But the haughty Montezuma refused to be waited upon by any but men of noble birth. They were not unfrequently the sons of the great chiefs, and remained as hostages in the absence of their fathers; thus serving the double purpose of security and state.[37]

His meals the emperor took alone. The well-matted floor of a large saloon was covered with

[36] "Vestíase todos los dias quatro maneras de vestiduras todas nuevas, y nunca mas se las vestia otra vez." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 114.

[37] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 67, 71, 76.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 113, 114.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—"A la puerta de la sala estaba vn patio mui grande en que habia cien aposentos de 25 ó 30 pies de largo cada vno sobre sí en torno de dicho patio, é allí estaban los Señores principales aposentados como guardas del palacio ordinarias, y estos tales aposentos se llaman galpones, los quales á la contina ocupan mas de 600 hombres, que jamas se quitaban de allí, é cada vno de aquellos tenian mas de 30 servidores de manera que á lo menos nunca faltaban 3000 hombres de guerra en esta guarda cotediana del palacio." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 46.) A very curious and full account of Montezuma's household is given by this author, as he gathered it from the Spaniards who saw it in its splendor. As Oviedo's history still remains in manuscript, I have transferred the chapter in the original Castilian to Appendix, No. 10.

hundreds of dishes.[38] Sometimes Montezuma himself, but more frequently his steward, indicated those which he preferred, and which were kept hot by means of chafing-dishes.[39] The royal bill of fare comprehended, besides domestic animals, game from the distant forests, and fish which, the day before, were swimming in the Gulf of Mexico! They were dressed in manifold ways, for the Aztec *artistes,* as we have already had occasion to notice, had penetrated deep into the mysteries of culinary science.[40]

The meats were served by the attendant nobles, who then resigned the office of waiting on the monarch to maidens selected for their personal grace and beauty. A screen of richly gilt and carved wood was drawn around him, so as to conceal him from vulgar eyes during the repast. He was seated on a cushion, and the dinner was served

[38] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.

[39] "Y porque la Tierra es fria trahian debaxo de cada plato y escudilla de manjar un braserico con brasa, porque no se enfriasse." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 113.

[40] Bernal Diaz has given us a few items of the royal *carte.* The first cover is rather a startling one, being a fricassee or stew of little children! "*carnes de muchachos de poca edad.*" * He admits, however, that this is somewhat apocryphal. Ibid., ubi supra.

* [The story of Bernal Diaz is not at all improbable. Young children were frequently sacrificed in order to obtain the auspices. As the flesh of human victims was always eaten, it goes without saying that "dishes of tender children" must have appeared at times upon the tables. Bancroft (Native Races, vol. ii. p. 176, Note) explains that Torquemada (Monarq. Ind.) "regrets that certain persons, out of the ill-will they bore the Mexicans, have falsely imputed to Montezuma the crime of eating human flesh, *without its being well seasoned,* but he admits that when properly cooked and disguised, the flesh of those sacrificed to the gods appeared at the royal board.—M.]

on a low table covered with a delicate cotton cloth. The dishes were of the finest ware of Cholula. He had a service of gold, which was reserved for religious celebrations. Indeed, it would scarcely have comported with even his princely revenues to have used it on ordinary occasions, when his table-equipage was not allowed to appear a second time, but was given away to his attendants. The saloon was lighted by torches made of a resinous wood, which sent forth a sweet odor and, probably, not a little smoke, as they burned. At his meal, he was attended by five or six of his ancient counsellors, who stood at a respectful distance, answering his questions, and occasionally rejoiced by some of the viands with which he complimented them from his table.

This course of solid dishes was succeeded by another of sweetmeats and pastry, for which the Aztec cooks, provided with the important requisites of maize-flour, eggs, and the rich sugar of the aloe, were famous. Two girls were occupied at the farther end of the apartment, during dinner, in preparing fine rolls and wafers, with which they garnished the board from time to time. The emperor took no other beverage than the *chocolatl,* a potation of chocolate, flavored with vanilla and other spices, and so prepared as to be reduced to a froth of the consistency of honey, which gradually dissolved in the mouth. This beverage, if so it could be called, was served in golden goblets, with spoons of the same metal or of tortoise-shell finely wrought. The emperor was exceedingly fond of it, to judge from the quantity—no less than fifty

jars or pitchers—prepared for his own daily consumption.[41] Two thousand more were allowed for that of his household.[42]

The general arrangement of the meal seems to have been not very unlike that of Europeans. But no prince in Europe could boast a dessert which could compare with that of the Aztec emperor. For it was gathered fresh from the most opposite climes; and his board displayed the products of his own temperate region, and the luscious fruits of the tropics, plucked, the day previous, from the green groves of the *tierra caliente,* and transmitted with the speed of steam, by means of couriers, to the capital. It was as if some kind fairy should crown our banquets with the spicy products that but yesterday were growing in a sunny isle of the far-off Indian seas! *

After the emperor's appetite was appeased, water was handed to him by the female attendants in a silver basin, in the same manner as had been done before commencing his meal; for the Aztecs were as constant in their ablutions, at these times, as any nation of the East. Pipes were then brought, made of a varnished and richly-gilt wood, from which he inhaled, sometimes through

[41] "*Lo que yo vi,*" says Diaz, speaking from his own observation, "que traian sobre cincuenta jarros grandes hechos de buen cacao con su espuma, y de lo que bebia." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[42] Ibid., ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 113, 114.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11, 46.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 67.

* [This description, as Señor Alaman observes, seems to have a tincture of romance, since many of the fruits now produced in such abundance in Mexico were unknown there previous to the Conquest. Conquista de Méjico, trad. de Vega, tom. i. p. 373.—K.]

the nose, at others through the mouth, the fumes of an intoxicating weed, "called *tobacco*," [43] mingled with liquid amber. While this soothing process of fumigation was going on, the emperor enjoyed the exhibitions of his mountebanks and jugglers, of whom a regular corps was attached to the palace. No people, not even those of China or Hindostan, surpassed the Aztecs in feats of agility and legerdemain.[44]

Sometimes he amused himself with his jester; for the Indian monarch had his jesters, as well as his more refined brethren of Europe, at that day. Indeed, he used to say that more instruction was to be gathered from them than from wiser men, for they dared to tell the truth. At other times he witnessed the graceful dances of his women, or took delight in listening to music,—if the rude minstrelsy of the Mexicans deserve that name,—accompanied by a chant, in slow and solemn cadence, celebrating the heroic deeds of great Aztec warriors, or of his own princely line.

When he had sufficiently refreshed his spirits with these diversions, he composed himself to sleep, for in his *siesta* he was as regular as a Spaniard. On awaking, he gave audience to ambassadors from foreign states or his own tributary cities, or to such caciques as had suits to prefer to him.

[43] "Tambien le ponian en la mesa tres cañutos muy pintados, y dorados, y dentro traian liquidámbar, rebuelto con vnas yervas *que se dize tabaco*." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[44] The feats of jugglers and tumblers were a favorite diversion with the Grand Khan of China, as Sir John Maundeville informs us. (Voiage and Travaille, chap. 22.) The Aztec mountebanks had such repute, that Cortés sent two of them to Rome to amuse his Holiness Clement VII. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 186.

MONTEZUMA

or nose, at others through the mouth, the fumes of an intoxicating weed, "called *tabacco*,"[8] mingled with liquid amber. While this soothing process of fumigation was going on, the emperor enjoyed the exhibitions of his mountebanks and jugglers, of whom a regular corps was attached to the palace. No people, not even those of China or Hindostan, surpassed the Aztecs in feats of agility and legerdemain.[9]

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They were introduced by the young nobles in attendance, and, whatever might be their rank, unless of the blood royal, they were obliged to submit to the humiliation of shrouding their rich dresses under the coarse mantle of nequen, and entering bare-footed, with downcast eyes, into the presence. The emperor addressed few and brief remarks to the suitors, answering them generally by his secretaries; and the parties retired with the same reverential obeisance, taking care to keep their faces turned towards the monarch. Well might Cortés exclaim that no court, whether of the Grand Seignior or any other infidel, ever displayed so pompous and elaborate a ceremonial![45]

Besides the crowd of retainers already noticed, the royal household was not complete without a host of artisans constantly employed in the erection or repair of buildings, besides a great number of jewellers and persons skilled in working metals, who found abundant demand for their trinkets among the dark-eyed beauties of the harem. The imperial mummers and jugglers were also very numerous, and the dancers belonging to the palace occupied a particular district of the city, appropriated exclusively to them.

The maintenance of this little host, amounting to some thousands of individuals, involved a heavy expenditure, requiring accounts of a complicated and, to a simple people, it might well be, embarrassing nature. Everything, however, was con-

[45] "Ninguno de los Soldanes, ni otro ningun señor infiel, de los que hasta agora se tiene noticia, no creo, que tantas, ni tales ceremonias en servicio tengan." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 115.

ducted with perfect order; and all the various receipts and disbursements were set down in the picture-writing of the country. The arithmetical characters were of a more refined and conventional sort than those for narrative purposes; and a separate apartment was filled with hieroglyphical legers, exhibiting a complete view of the economy of the palace. The care of all this was intrusted to a treasurer, who acted as a sort of major-domo in the household, having a general superintendence over all its concerns. This responsible office, on the arrival of the Spaniards, was in the hands of a trusty cacique named Tápia.[46] *

Such is the picture of Montezuma's domestic establishment † and way of living, as delineated by

[46] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 110–115.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.

* [The name, which is Spanish, not Aztec, was that given to him by the Conquerors, perhaps with some reference to one of their own number, Andrés de Tápia.—K.]

† [Prescott's picture of Montezuma's domestic establishment and way of living is drawn, without enlargement, from sketches supplied by Cortés and Bernal Diaz—two men who *saw* the state in which the Aztec chief lived. Their observations extended over a period of only five days, as Cortés made Montezuma his prisoner at the end of that time. Subsequent historians, amplifying details only hinted at by the two eye-witnesses, have given free rein to the imagination. The last important contribution to the subject came from the pen of H. H. Bancroft, Native Races, vol. ii. chap. iv (Palaces and Households of the Nahua Kings). It was his glowing account, in which were incorporated the details specified by the later Spanish historians, which so roused the indignation of Lewis H. Morgan as to move that scholar to put forth his famous essay, "Montezuma's Dinner." This essay created an immense impression when it first appeared, but a careful examination will demonstrate the fact that it contains almost as many misstatements as do the pages of Ban-

the Conquerors and their immediate followers, who had the best means of information;[47] too highly colored, it may be, by the proneness to exaggerate, which was natural to those who first witnessed a spectacle so striking to the imagination, so new and unexpected. I have thought it best to present the full details, trivial though they may seem to the reader, as affording a curious picture of manners so superior in point of refinement to those of the other aboriginal tribes on the North American continent. Nor are they, in fact, so trivial, when we reflect that in these details of private life we

[47] If the historian will descend but a generation later for his authorities, he may find materials for as good a chapter as any in Sir John Maundeville or the Arabian Nights.

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croft. Mr. Morgan begins by saying that the histories of Spanish America may be trusted in whatever relates "to the acts and personal characteristics of the Indians: in whatever relates to their weapons, implements, and utensils, fabrics, *food,* and raiment, and things of a similar character," and then entirely ignores the fact that Cortés and Bernal Diaz actually *saw* what they afterward described. He points out, what most men will at once admit, that the dinners the Conquerors described were not repasts provided for a king alone, but that they represented the daily fare of a great communal household. Meals prepared on almost as large a scale were served in other great communal houses in Mexico. In fact, all the dinners served in the city were communal dinners, for all the authorities agree that even the smallest houses were inhabited by several families. But when, with fine scorn, he takes exception to the expression "wine cellars," and claims, first, that cellars were impossible in a city where the level of the streets and courts was but four feet above the level of the water of the surrounding lake, and, second, that the Aztecs had no knowledge of wine, we feel that he is hypercritical. When he goes on to say that "though an acid beer, pulque, was a common beverage of the Aztecs, yet *it is hardly supposable that even this was used at dinner,*" one is inevitably led to the conclusion that Mr. Morgan had but little knowledge of the dinner habits of some of his contemporaries in the cities of western New York. It is not inconceivable that even in his own city of Rochester families can be found who take beer with their principal meal.—M.]

possess a surer measure of civilization than in those of a public nature.

In surveying them we are strongly reminded of the civilization of the East; not of that higher, intellectual kind which belonged to the more polished Arabs and the Persians, but that semi-civilization which has distinguished, for example, the Tartar races, among whom art, and even science, have made, indeed, some progress in the adaptation to material wants and sensual gratification, but little in reference to the higher and more ennobling interests of humanity. It is characteristic of such a people to find a puerile pleasure in a dazzling and ostentatious pageantry; to mistake show for substance, vain pomp for power; to hedge round the throne itself with a barren and burdensome ceremonial, the counterfeit of real majesty.

Even this, however, was an advance in refinement, compared with the rude manners of the earlier Aztecs. The change may, doubtless, be referred in some degree to the personal influence of Montezuma. In his younger days he had tempered the fierce habits of the soldier with the milder profession of religion. In later life he had withdrawn himself still more from the brutalizing occupations of war, and his manners acquired a refinement, tinctured, it may be added, with an effeminacy, unknown to his martial predecessors.

The condition of the empire, too, under his reign, was favorable to this change. The dismemberment of the Tezcucan kingdom on the death of the great Nezahualpilli had left the Aztec monarchy without a rival; and it soon spread its colossal arms

over the farthest limits of Anahuac. The aspiring mind of Montezuma rose with the acquisition of wealth and power; and he displayed the consciousness of new importance by the assumption of unprecedented state. He affected a reserve unknown to his predecessors, withdrew his person from the vulgar eye, and fenced himself round with an elaborate and courtly etiquette. When he went abroad, it was in state, on some public occasion, usually to the great temple, to take part in the religious services; and as he passed along he exacted from his people, as we have seen, the homage of an adulation worthy of an Oriental despot.[48] His haughty demeanor touched the pride of his more potent vassals, particularly those who, at a distance, felt themselves nearly independent of his authority. His exactions, demanded by the profuse expenditure of his palace, scattered broadcast the seeds of discontent; and, while the empire seemed towering in its most palmy and prosperous state, the canker had eaten deepest into its heart.

[48] "Referre in tanto rege piget superbam mutationem vestis, et desideratas humi jacentium adulationes." (Livy, Hist., lib. 9, cap. 18.) The remarks of the Roman historian in reference to Alexander, after he was infected by the manners of Persia, fit equally well the Aztec emperor.

CHAPTER II

MARKET OF MEXICO—GREAT TEMPLE—INTERIOR SANCTUARIES—SPANISH QUARTERS

1519

FOUR days had elapsed since the Spaniards made their entry into Mexico. Whatever schemes their commander may have revolved in his mind, he felt that he could determine on no plan of operations till he had seen more of the capital and ascertained by his own inspection the nature of its resources. He accordingly, as was observed at the close of the last Book, sent to Montezuma, asking permission to visit the great *teocalli,* and some other places in the city.

The friendly monarch consented without difficulty. He even prepared to go in person to the great temple to receive his guests there,—it may be, to shield the shrine of his tutelar deity from any attempted profanation. He was acquainted, as we have already seen, with the proceedings of the Spaniards on similar occasions in the course of their march. Cortés put himself at the head of his little corps of cavalry, and nearly all the Spanish foot, as usual, and followed the caciques sent by Montezuma to guide him. They proposed first to con-

duct him to the great market of Tlatelolco, in the western part of the city.

On the way, the Spaniards were struck, in the same manner as they had been on entering the capital, with the appearance of the inhabitants, and their great superiority in the style and quality of their dress over the people of the lower countries.[1] The *tilmatli,* or cloak thrown over the shoulders and tied round the neck, made of cotton of different degrees of fineness, according to the condition of the wearer, and the ample sash around the loins, were often wrought in rich and elegant figures and edged with a deep fringe or tassel. As the weather was now growing cool, mantles of fur or of the gorgeous feather-work were sometimes substituted. The latter combined the advantage of great warmth with beauty.[2] The Mexicans had also the art of spinning a fine thread of the hair of the rabbit and other animals, which they wove into a delicate web that took a permanent dye.

The women, as in other parts of the country, seemed to go about as freely as the men. They wore several skirts or petticoats of different

[1] "La Gente de esta Ciudad es de mas manera y primor en su vestido, y servicio, que no la otra de estas otras Provincias, y Ciudades; porque como allí estaba siempre este Señor Muteczuma, y todos los Señores sus Vasallos ocurrian siempre á la Ciudad, habia en ella mas manera, y policía en todas las cosas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 109.

[2] Zuazo, speaking of the beauty and warmth of this national fabric, says, "Ví muchas mantas de á dos haces labradas de plumas de papos de aves tan suaves, que trayendo la mano por encima á pelo y á pospelo, no era mas que vna manta zebellina mui bien adobada: hice pesar vna dellas; no pesó mas de seis onzas. Dicen que en el tiempo del Ynbierno una abasta para encima de la camisa sin otro cobertor ni mas ropa encima de la cama." Carta, MS.

lengths, with highly-ornamented borders, and sometimes over them loose flowing robes, which reached to the ankles. These, also, were made of cotton, for the wealthier classes, of a fine texture, prettily embroidered.[3] No veils were worn here, as in some other parts of Anahuac, where they were made of the aloe thread, or of the light web of hair, above noticed. The Aztec women had their faces exposed; and their dark, raven tresses floated luxuriantly over their shoulders, revealing features which, although of a dusky or rather cinnamon hue, were not unfrequently pleasing, while touched with the serious, even sad expression characteristic of the national physiognomy.[4]

On drawing near to the *tianguez,* or great market, the Spaniards were astonished at the throng of people pressing towards it, and on entering the place their surprise was still further heightened by the sight of the multitudes assembled there, and the dimensions of the enclosure,* thrice as large as the celebrated square of Salamanca.[5] Here were met together traders from all parts, with the products and manufactures peculiar to their countries; the goldsmiths of Azcapozalco, the potters and jewellers of Cholula, the painters of Tezcuco, the stone-cutters of Tenajocan, the hunters of Xilotepec, the fishermen of Cuitlahuac, the fruiterers

[3] "Sono lunghe & large, lauorate di bellisimi, & molto gentili lauori sparsi per esse, cō le loro frangie, ò orletti ben lauorati che compariscono benissimo." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[4] Ibid., fol. 305.

[5] Ibid., fol. 309.

* [*Ante,* p. 288, note.—M.]

of the warm countries, the mat- and chair-makers of Quauhtitlan, and the florists of Xochimilco,—all busily engaged in recommending their respective wares and in chaffering with purchasers.[6]

The market-place was surrounded by deep porticoes, and the several articles had each its own quarter allotted to it. Here might be seen cotton piled up in bales, or manufactured into dresses and articles of domestic use, as tapestry, curtains, coverlets, and the like. The richly stained and nice fabrics reminded Cortés of the *alcayceria,* or silk-market, of Granada. There was the quarter assigned to the goldsmiths, where the purchaser might find various articles of ornament or use formed of the precious metals, or curious toys, such as we have already had occasion to notice, made in imitation of birds and fishes, with scales and feathers alternately of gold and silver, and with movable heads and bodies. These fantastic little trinkets were often garnished with precious stones, and showed a patient, puerile ingenuity in the manufacture, like that of the Chinese.[7]

[6] "Quivi concorrevano i Pentolai ed i Giojellieri di Cholulla, gli Orefici d' Azcapozalco, i Pittori di Tezcuco, gli Scarpellini di Tenajocan, i Cacciatori di Xilotepec, i Pescatori di Cuitlahuac, i fruttajuoli de' paesi caldi, gli artefici di stuoje, e di scranne di Quauhtitlan ed i coltivatori de' fiori di Xochimilco." Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 165.

[7] "Oro y plata, piedras de valor, con otros plumajes é argenterías maravillosas, y con tanto primor fabricadas que excede todo ingenio humano para comprenderlas y alcanzarlas." (Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) The licentiate then enumerates several of these elegant pieces of mechanism. Cortés is not less emphatic in his admiration: "Contrahechas de oro, y plata, y piedras y plumas, tan al natural lo de Oro, y Plata, que no ha Platero en el Mundo que mejor lo hiciesse, y lo de las Piedras, que no baste juicio comprehender con que Instrumentos se hiciesse tan perfecto, y lo de Pluma, que ni de Cera, ni

In an adjoining quarter were collected specimens of pottery coarse and fine, vases of wood elaborately carved, varnished or gilt, of curious and sometimes graceful forms. There were also hatchets made of copper alloyed with tin, the substitute, and, as it proved, not a bad one, for iron. The soldier found here all the implements of his trade: the casque fashioned into the head of some wild animal, with its grinning defences of teeth, and bristling crest dyed with the rich tint of the cochineal;[8] the *escaupil,* or quilted doublet of cotton, the rich surcoat of feather-mail, and weapons of all sorts, copper-headed lances and arrows, and the broad *maquahuitl,* the Mexican sword, with its sharp blades of *itztli.* Here were razors and mirrors of this same hard and polished mineral, which served so many of the purposes of steel with the Aztecs.[9] In the square were also to be found booths occupied by barbers, who used these same razors in their vocation. For the Mexicans, contrary to the popular and erroneous notions respecting the aborigines of the New World, had beards,

en ningun broslado se podria hacer tan maravillosamente." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 110.) Peter Martyr, a less prejudiced critic than Cortés, who saw and examined many of these golden trinkets afterwards in Castile, bears the same testimony to the exquisite character of the workmanship, which, he says, far surpassed the value of the material. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[8] Herrera makes the unauthorized assertion, repeated by Solís, that the Mexicans were unacquainted with the value of the cochineal till it was taught them by the Spaniards. (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 4, lib. 8, cap. 11.) The natives, on the contrary, took infinite pains to rear the insect on plantations of the cactus, and it formed one of the staple tributes to the crown from certain districts. See the tribute-rolls, ap. Lorenzana, Nos. 23, 24.—Hernandez, Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 116.—Also, Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 114, nota.

[9] *Ante,* vol. i. p. 155.

though scanty ones. Other shops or booths were tenanted by apothecaries, well provided with drugs, roots, and different medicinal preparations. In other places, again, blank books or maps for the hieroglyphical picture-writing were to be seen, folded together like fans, and made of cotton, skins, or more commonly the fibres of the agave, the Aztec papyrus.

Under some of the porticoes they saw hides raw and dressed, and various articles for domestic or personal use made of the leather. Animals, both wild and tame, were offered for sale, and near them, perhaps, a gang of slaves, with collars round their necks, intimating they were likewise on sale, —a spectacle unhappily not confined to the barbarian markets of Mexico, though the evils of their condition were aggravated there by the consciousness that a life of degradation might be consummated at any moment by the dreadful doom of sacrifice.

The heavier materials for building, as stone, lime, timber, were considered too bulky to be allowed a place in the square, and were deposited in the adjacent streets on the borders of the canals. It would be tedious to enumerate all the various articles, whether for luxury or daily use, which were collected from all quarters in this vast bazaar. I must not omit to mention, however, the display of provisions, one of the most attractive features of the *tianguez;* meats of all kinds, domestic poultry, game from the neighboring mountains, fish from the lakes and streams, fruits in all the delicious abundance of these temperate regions, green vege-

tables, and the unfailing maize. There was many a viand, too, ready dressed, which sent up its savory steams provoking the appetite of the idle passenger; pastry, bread of the Indian corn, cakes, and confectionery.[10] Along with these were to be seen cooling or stimulating beverages, the spicy foaming *chocolatl,* with its delicate aroma of vanilla, and the inebriating *pulque,* the fermented juice of the aloe. All these commodities, and every stall and portico, were set out, or rather smothered, with flowers, showing—on a much greater scale, indeed—a taste similar to that displayed in the markets of modern Mexico. Flowers seem to be the spontaneous growth of this luxuriant soil; which, instead of noxious weeds, as in other regions, is ever ready, without the aid of man, to cover up its nakedness with this rich and variegated livery of Nature.[11]

I will spare the reader the repetition of all the particulars enumerated by the bewildered Spaniards, which are of some interest as evincing the various mechanical skill and the polished wants, resembling those of a refined community rather

[10] Zuazo, who seems to have been nice in these matters, concludes a paragraph of dainties with the following tribute to the Aztec *cuisine:* "Vendense huebos asados, crudos, en tortilla, é diversidad de guisados que se suelen guisar, con otras cazuelas y pasteles, que en el mal cocinado de Medina, ni en otros lugares de Tlamencos dicen que hai ni se pueden hallar tales trujamanes." Carta, MS.

[11] Ample details—many more than I have thought it necessary to give—of the Aztec market of Tlatelolco may be found in the writings of all the old Spaniards who visited the capital. Among others, see Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 103–105.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.

than of a nation of savages. It was the *material* civilization, which belongs neither to the one nor the other. The Aztec had plainly reached that middle station, as far above the rude races of the New World as it was below the cultivated communities of the Old.

As to the numbers assembled in the market, the estimates differ, as usual. The Spaniards often visited the place, and no one states the amount at less than forty thousand! Some carry it much higher.[12] Without relying too much on the arithmetic of the Conquerors, it is certain that on this occasion, which occurred every fifth day, the city swarmed with a motley crowd of strangers, not only from the vicinity, but from many leagues around; the causeways were thronged, and the lake was darkened by canoes filled with traders flocking to the great *tianguez*. It resembled, indeed, the periodical fairs in Europe, not as they exist now, but as they existed in the Middle Ages, when, from the difficulties of intercommunication, they served as the great central marts for commercial inter-

[12] Zuazo raises it to 80,000! (Carta, MS.) Cortés to 60,000. (Rel. Seg., ubi supra.) The most modest computation is that of the "Anonymous Conqueror," who says from 40,000 to 50,000. "Et il giorno del mercato, che si fa di cinque in cinque giorni, vi, sono da quaranta ò cinquanta mila persone" (Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309); a confirmation, by the by, of the supposition that the estimated population of the capital, found in the Italian version of this author, is a misprint. (See the preceding chapter, note 13.) He would hardly have crowded an amount equal to the whole of it into the market.*

* [And yet, even now, the number of "persone," *i.e.*, shoppers or transient visitors, in a Mexican or Peruvian plaza on a great fair day, not infrequently equals the number of "habitatori," or permanent inhabitants of the city.—M.]

course, exercising a most important and salutary influence on the community.

The exchanges were conducted partly by barter, but more usually in the currency of the country. This consisted of bits of tin stamped with a character like a T, bags of cacao, the value of which was regulated by their size, and, lastly, quills filled with gold dust.[13] Gold was part of the regular currency, it seems, in both hemispheres. In their dealings it is singular that they should have had no knowledge of scales and weights. The quantity was determined by measure and number.[14]

The most perfect order reigned throughout this vast assembly. Officers patrolled the square, whose business it was to keep the peace, to collect the duties imposed on the different articles of merchandise, to see that no false measures or fraud of any kind were used, and to bring offenders at once to justice. A court of twelve judges sat in one part of the *tianguez*, clothed with those ample and summary powers which in despotic countries are often delegated even to petty tribunals. The extreme severity with which they exercised these powers, in more than one instance, proves that they were not a dead letter.[15]

The *tianguez* of Mexico was naturally an object

[13] [From the description of the coin, Ramirez infers that it was not stamped, but cut, in the form mentioned in the text. This is confirmed by one or two specimens of the kind still preserved in the National Museum at Mexico. Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 102.]

[14] *Ante,* vol. i. p. 161.

[15] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 104.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10. —Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, loc. cit.

of great interest, as well as wonder, to the Spaniards. For in it they saw converged into one focus, as it were, all the rays of civilization scattered throughout the land. Here they beheld the various evidences of mechanical skill, of domestic industry, the multiplied resources, of whatever kind, within the compass of the natives. It could not fail to impress them with high ideas of the magnitude of these resources, as well as of the commercial activity and social subordination by which the whole community was knit together; and their admiration is fully evinced by the minuteness and energy of their descriptions.[16]

From this bustling scene the Spaniards took their way to the great *teocalli,* in the neighborhood of their own quarters. It covered, with the subordinate edifices, as the reader has already seen, the large tract of ground now occupied by the cathedral, part of the market-place, and some of the adjoining streets.[17] It was the spot which had been consecrated to the same object, probably, ever since the foundation of the city. The present building, however, was of no great antiquity, having been constructed by Ahuitzotl, who celebrated its dedication, in 1486, by that hecatomb of victims of which such incredible reports are to be found in the chronicles.[18]

[16] "There were amongst us," says Diaz, "soldiers who had been in many parts of the world,—in Constantinople and in Rome and through all Italy,—and who said that a market-place so large, so well ordered and regulated, and so filled with people, they had never seen." Hist. de la Conquista, loc. cit.

[17] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 27.

[18] *Ante,* vol. i. p. 94.—[A minute account of the site and extent of the ground covered by the great temple is given by Alaman (Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. pp. 216–248). The Mexicans are largely

It stood in the midst of a vast area, encompassed by a wall of stone and lime, about eight feet high, ornamented on the outer side by figures of serpents, raised in relief, which gave it the name of the *coatepantli*, or "wall of serpents." This emblem was a common one in the sacred sculpture of Anahuac, as well as of Egypt. The wall, which was quadrangular, was pierced by huge battlemented gateways, opening on the four principal streets of the capital. Over each of the gates was a kind of arsenal, filled with arms and warlike gear; and, if we may credit the report of the Conquerors, there were barracks adjoining, garrisoned by ten thousand soldiers, who served as a sort of military police for the capital, supplying the emperor with a strong arm in case of tumult or sedition.[19]

The *teocalli* itself was a solid pyramidal structure of earth and pebbles, coated on the outside with hewn stones, probably of the light, porous kind employed in the buildings of the city.[20] It was probably square, with its sides facing the cardinal points.[21] It was divided into five bodies or

indebted to this eminent scholar for his elaborate researches into the topography and antiquities of the Aztec capital.]

[19] "Et di più v' hauea vna guarnigione di dieci mila huomini di guerra, tutti eletti per huomini valenti, & questi accompagnauano & guardauano la sua persona, & quando si facca qualche rumore ò ribellione nella città ò nel paese circumuicino, andauano questi, ò parte d' essi per Capitani." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[20] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 40.—On paving the square, not long ago, round the modern cathedral, there were found large blocks of sculptured stone buried between thirty and forty feet deep in the ground. Ibid., loc. cit.

[21] Clavigero calls it oblong, on the alleged authority of the "Anonymous Conqueror." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 27, nota.) But

stories, each one receding so as to be of smaller dimensions than that immediately below it,—the usual form of the Aztec *teocallis,* as already described, and bearing obvious resemblance to some of the primitive pyramidal structures in the Old World.[22] The ascent was by a flight of steps on the outside, which reached to the narrow terrace or platform at the base of the second story, passing quite round the building, when a second stairway conducted to a similar landing at the base of the third. The breadth of this walk was just so much space as was left by the retreating story next above it. From this construction the visitor was obliged to pass round the whole edifice four times in order to reach the top. This had a most imposing effect in the religious ceremonials, when the pompous procession of priests with their wild minstrelsy came sweeping round the huge sides of the pyramid, as they rose higher and higher, in the presence of gazing multitudes, towards the summit.

The dimensions of the temple cannot be given with any certainty. The Conquerors judged by the eye, rarely troubling themselves with anything like an accurate measurement. It was, probably, not much less than three hundred feet square at

the latter says not a word of the shape, and his contemptible woodcut is too plainly destitute of all proportion to furnish an inference of any kind. (Comp. Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.) Torquemada and Gomara both say it was square (Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 11;—Crónica, cap. 80); and Toribio de Benavente, speaking generally of the Mexican temples, says they had that form. Hist. de los Ind., MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

[22] See the essay on the Origin of the Mexican Civilization. *Ante.*

the base;[23] and, as the Spaniards counted a hundred and fourteen steps, was, probably, less than one hundred feet in height.[24]

When Cortés arrived before the *teocalli,* he found two priests and several caciques commissioned by Montezuma to save him the fatigue of the ascent by bearing him on their shoulders, in the same manner as had been done to the emperor. But the general declined the compliment, preferring to march up at the head of his men. On reaching the summit, they found it a vast area, paved with broad flat stones. The first object that met their view was a large block of jasper, the peculiar shape of which showed it was the stone on which the bodies of the unhappy victims were stretched

[23] Clavigero, calling it oblong, adopts Torquemada's estimate—not Sahagun's, as he pretends, which he never saw, and who gives no measurement of the building—for the length, and Gomara's estimate, which is somewhat less, for the breadth. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 28, nota.) As both his authorities make the building square, this spirit of accommodation is whimsical enough. Toribio, who did measure a *teocalli* of the usual construction in the town of Tenayuca, found it to be forty *brazas,* or two hundred and forty feet, square. (Hist. de los Ind., MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.) The great temple of Mexico was undoubtedly larger, and, in the want of better authorities, one may accept Torquemada, who makes it a little more than three hundred and sixty Toledan, equal to three hundred and eight French, feet square. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 11.) How can M. de Humboldt speak of the "great concurrence of testimony" in regard to the dimensions of the temple? (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 41.) No two authorities agree.

[24] Bernal Diaz says he counted one hundred and fourteen steps. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.) Toribio says that more than one person who had numbered them told him they exceeded a hundred. (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.) The steps could hardly have been less than eight or ten inches high, each; Clavigero assumes that they were a foot, and that the building, therefore, was a hundred and fourteen feet high, precisely. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 28, 29.) It is seldom safe to use anything stronger than *probably* in history.

for sacrifice. Its convex surface, by raising the breast, enabled the priest to perform his diabolical task more easily, of removing the heart. At the other end of the area were two towers or sanctuaries, consisting of three stories, the lower one of stone and stucco, the two upper of wood elaborately carved. In the lower division stood the images of their gods; the apartments above were filled with utensils for their religious services, and with the ashes of some of their Aztec princes, who had fancied this airy sepulchre. Before each sanctuary stood an altar, with that undying fire upon it, the extinction of which boded as much evil to the empire as that of the Vestal flame would have done in ancient Rome. Here, also, was the huge cylindrical drum made of serpents' skins, and struck only on extraordinary occasions, when it sent forth a melancholy sound that might be heard for miles,—a sound of woe in aftertimes to the Spaniards.

Montezuma, attended by the high-priest, came forward to receive Cortés as he mounted the area. "You are weary, Malinche," said he to him, "with climbing up our great temple." But Cortés, with a politic vaunt, assured him "the Spaniards were never weary"! Then, taking him by the hand, the emperor pointed out the localities of the neighborhood. The temple on which they stood, rising high above all other edifices in the capital, afforded the most elevated as well as central point of view. Below them, the city lay spread out like a map, with its streets and canals intersecting each other at right angles, its terraced roofs blooming like so

many parterres of flowers. Every place seemed alive with business and bustle; canoes were glancing up and down the canals, the streets were crowded with people in their gay, picturesque costume, while from the market-place they had so lately left a confused hum of many sounds and voices rose upon the air.[25] They could distinctly trace the symmetrical plan of the city, with its principal avenues issuing, as it were, from the four gates of the *coatepantli* and connecting themselves with the causeways, which formed the grand entrances to the capital. This regular and beautiful arrangement was imitated in many of the inferior towns, where the great roads converged towards the chief *teocalli,* or cathedral, as to a common focus.[26] They could discern the insular position of the metropolis, bathed on all sides by the salt floods of the Tezcuco, and in the distance the clear fresh waters of the Chalco; far beyond stretched a wide prospect of fields and waving woods, with the burnished walls of many a lofty temple rising high above the trees and crowning the distant hilltops.[27] The view

[25] "Tornámos á ver la gran plaça, y la multitud de gente que en ella auia, vnos comprado, y otros vendiendo, que solamente el rumor, y zumbido de las vozes, y palabras que allí auia, sonaua mas que de vna legua!" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.

[26] "Y por honrar mas sus templos sacaban los caminos muy derechos por cordel de una y de dos leguas que era cosa harto de ver, desde lo Alto del principal templo, como venian de todos los pueblos menores y barrios; salian los caminos muy derechos y iban á dar al patio de los teocallis." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

[27] "No se contentaba el Demonio con los [Teucales] ya dichos, sino que en cada pueblo, en cada barrio, y á cuarto de legua, tenian otros patios pequeños adonde habia tres ó cuatro teocallis, y en algunos

reached in an unbroken line to the very base of the circular range of mountains, whose frosty peaks glittered as if touched with fire in the morning ray; while long, dark wreaths of vapor, rolling up from the hoary head of Popocatepetl, told that the destroying element was, indeed, at work in the bosom of the beautiful Valley.

Cortés was filled with admiration at this grand and glorious spectacle, and gave utterance to his feelings in animated language to the emperor, the lord of these flourishing domains. His thoughts, however, soon took another direction; and, turning to Father Olmedo, who stood by his side, he suggested that the area would afford a most conspicuous position for the Christian Cross, if Montezuma would but allow it to be planted there. But the discreet ecclesiastic, with the good sense which on these occasions seems to have been so lamentably deficient in his commander, reminded him that such a request, at present, would be exceedingly ill timed, as the Indian monarch had shown no dispositions as yet favorable to Christianity.[28]

Cortés then requested Montezuma to allow him to enter the sanctuaries and behold the shrines of his gods. To this the latter, after a short conference with the priests, assented, and conducted the Spaniards into the building. They found them-

mas, en otras partes solo uno, y en cada Mogote ó Cerrejon uno ó dos, y por los caminos y entre los Maizales, habia otros muchos pequeños, y todos estaban blancos y encalados, que parecian y abultaban mucho, que en la tierra bien poblada parecia que todo estaba lleno de casas, en especial de los patios del Demonio, que eran muy de ver." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., ubi supra.

[28] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

selves in a spacious apartment incrusted on the sides with stucco, on which various figures were sculptured, representing the Mexican calendar, perhaps, or the priestly ritual. At one end of the saloon was a recess with a roof of timber richly carved and gilt. Before the altar in this sanctuary stood the colossal image of Huitzilopochtli, the tutelary deity and war-god of the Aztecs. His countenance was distorted into hideous lineaments of symbolical import. In his right hand he wielded a bow, and in his left a bunch of golden arrows, which a mystic legend had connected with the victories of his people. The huge folds of a serpent, consisting of pearls and precious stones, were coiled round his waist, and the same rich materials were profusely sprinkled over his person. On his left foot were the delicate feathers of the humming-bird, which, singularly enough, gave its name to the dread deity.[29] The most conspicuous ornament was a chain of gold and silver hearts alternate, suspended round his neck, emblematical of the sacrifice in which he most delighted. A more unequivocal evidence of this was afforded by three human hearts smoking and almost palpitating, as if recently torn from the victims, and now lying on the altar before him!

The adjoining sanctuary was dedicated to a milder deity. This was Tezcatlipoca, next in honor to that invisible Being, the Supreme God, who was represented by no image and confined by no temple. It was Tezcatlipoca who created the world and watched over it with a providential care. He

[29] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 70.

was represented as a young man, and his image, of polished black stone, was richly garnished with gold plates and ornaments, among which a shield burnished like a mirror was the most characteristic emblem, as in it he saw reflected all the doings of the world. But the homage to this god was not always of a more refined or merciful character than that paid to his carnivorous brother; for five bleeding hearts were also seen in a golden platter on his altar.

The walls of both these chapels were stained with human gore. "The stench was more intolerable," exclaims Diaz, "than that of the slaughter-houses in Castile!" And the frantic forms of the priests, with their dark robes clotted with blood, as they flitted to and fro, seemed to the Spaniards to be those of the very ministers of Satan![30]

From this foul abode they gladly escaped into the open air; when Cortés, turning to Montezuma, said, with a smile, "I do not comprehend how a great and wise prince, like you, can put faith in such evil spirits as these idols, the representatives of the Devil! If you will but permit us to erect here the true Cross, and place the images of the blessed Virgin and her Son in your sanctuaries, you will soon see how your false gods will shrink before them!"

Montezuma was greatly shocked at this sac-

[30] "Y tenia en las paredes tantas costras de sangre, y el suelo todo bañado dello, que en los mataderos de Castilla no auia tanto hedor." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 105, 106.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—See, also, for notices of these deities, Sahagun, lib. 3, cap. 1, et seq.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 20, 21.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 9.

rilegious address. "These are the gods," he answered, "who have led the Aztecs on to victory since they were a nation, and who send the seed-time and harvest in their seasons. Had I thought you would have offered them this outrage, I would not have admitted you into their presence."

Cortés, after some expressions of concern at having wounded the feelings of the emperor, took his leave. Montezuma remained, saying that he must expiate, if possible, the crime of exposing the shrines of the divinities to such profanation by the strangers.[31]

On descending to the court, the Spanish took a leisurely survey of the other edifices in the enclosure. The area was protected by a smooth stone pavement, so polished, indeed, that it was with difficulty the horses could keep their legs. There were several other *teocallis,* built generally on the model of the great one, though of much inferior size, dedicated to the different Aztec deities.[32] On their summits were the altars crowned with perpetual flames, which, with those on the numerous temples in other quarters of the capital, shed a

[31] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., ubi supra.—Whoever examines Cortés' great letter to Charles V. will be surprised to find it stated that, instead of any acknowledgment to Montezuma, he threw down his idols and erected the Christian emblems in their stead. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 106.) This was an event of much later date. The *Conquistador* wrote his despatches too rapidly and concisely to give heed always to exact time and circumstance. We are quite as likely to find them attended to in the long-winded, gossiping,—inestimable chronicle of Diaz.

[32] "Quarenta torres muy altas y bien obradas." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 105.

brilliant illumination over its streets through the long nights.[33]

Among the *teocallis* in the enclosure was one consecrated to Quetzalcoatl, circular in its form, and having an entrance in imitation of a dragon's mouth, bristling with sharp fangs and dropping with blood. As the Spaniards cast a furtive glance into the throat of this horrible monster, they saw collected there implements of sacrifice and other abominations of fearful import. Their bold hearts shuddered at the spectacle, and they designated the place not inaptly as the "Hell." [34]

One other structure may be noticed as characteristic of the brutish nature of their religion. This was a pyramidal mound or tumulus, having a complicated frame-work of timber on its broad summit. On this was strung an immense number of human skulls, which belonged to the victims, mostly prisoners of war, who had perished on the accursed stone of sacrifice. Two of the soldiers had the patience to count the number of these ghastly trophies, and reported it to be one hundred and thirty-six thousand! [35] Belief might well be stag-

[33] "Delante de todos estos altares habia braçeros que toda la noche hardian, y en las salas tambien tenian sus fuegos." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

[34] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., ubi supra.—Toribio, also, notices this temple with the same complimentary epithet. "La boca hecha como de infierno y en ella pintada la boca de una temerosa Sierpe con terribles colmillos y dientes, y en algunas de estas los colmillos eran de bulto, que verlo y entrar dentro ponia gran temor y grima, en especial el infierno que estaba en México, que parecia traslado del verdadero infierno." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.

[35] Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.—"Andres de Tapia, *que me lo dijo*, i Gonçalo de Umbria, las contáron vn Dia, i halláron ciento i treinta

gered, did not the Old World present a worthy counterpart in the pyramidal Golgothas which commemorated the triumphs of Tamerlane.[36]

There were long ranges of buildings in the enclosure, appropriated as the residence of the priests and others engaged in the offices of religion. The whole number of them was said to amount to several thousand. Here were, also, the principal seminaries for the instruction of youth of both sexes, drawn chiefly from the higher and wealthier classes. The girls were taught by elderly women who officiated as priestesses in the temples, a custom familiar, also, to Egypt. The Spaniards admit that the greatest care for morals, and the most blameless deportment, were maintained in these institutions. The time of the pupils was chiefly occupied, as in most monastic establishments, with the minute and burdensome ceremonial of their re-

i seis mil Calaberas, en las Vigas, i Gradas." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 82.*

[36] Three collections, thus fancifully disposed, of these grinning horrors—in all 230,000—are noticed by Gibbon! (Decline and Fall, ed. Milman, vol. i. p. 52; vol. xii. p. 45.) A *European* scholar commends "the conqueror's piety, his moderation, and his justice"! Rowe's Dedication of "Tamerlane."

* [Gomara is so often accused of exaggeration and falsehood that it is satisfactory to find his exactness, in the present instance, established by the evidence of Tápia himself, who thus describes the manner in which the estimate was made: "E quien esto escribe, y un Gonzalo de Umbréa, contaron los palos que habie, é multiplicando á cinco cabezas cada palo de los que entre viga y viga estaban, . . . hallamos haber ciento treinta y seis mill cabezas, *sin las de las torres.*" (Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. iii.) The original of this "Relacion," recently discovered, is in the library of the Academy of History at Madrid. It is an unfinished narrative, valuable as the production of one of the chief companions of Cortés, and for the confirmation it affords of other contemporaneous accounts of the Conquest.—K.]

ligion. The boys were likewise taught such elements of science as were known to their teachers, and the girls initiated in the mysteries of embroidery and weaving, which they employed in decorating the temples. At a suitable age they generally went forth into the world to assume the occupations fitted to their condition, though some remained permanently devoted to the services of religion.[37]

The spot was also covered by edifices of a still different character. There were granaries filled with the rich produce of the church-lands and with the first-fruits and other offerings of the faithful. One large mansion was reserved for strangers of eminence who were on a pilgrimage to the great *teocalli*. The enclosure was ornamented with gardens, shaded by ancient trees and watered by fountains and reservoirs from the copious streams of Chapoltepec. The little community was thus provided with almost everything requisite for its own maintenance and the services of the temple.[38]

It was a microcosm of itself, a city within a city, and, according to the assertion of Cortés, embraced a tract of ground large enough for five hundred houses.[39] It presented in their brief compass the

[37] *Ante*, vol. i. pp. 83, 84.—The desire of presenting the reader with a complete view of the actual state of the capital at the time of its occupation by the Spaniards has led me in this and the preceding chapter into a few repetitions of remarks on the Aztec institutions in the Introductory Book of this History.

[38] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 80.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[39] "Es tan grande que dentro del circuito de ella, que es todo cercado de Muro muy alto, se podia muy bien facer una Villa de quinientos Vecinos." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 105.

extremes of barbarism, blended with a certain civilization, altogether characteristic of the Aztecs. The rude Conquerors saw only the evidence of the former. In the fantastic and symbolical features of the deities they beheld the literal lineaments of Satan; in the rites and frivolous ceremonial, his own especial code of damnation; and in the modest deportment and careful nurture of the inmates of the seminaries, the snares by which he was to beguile his deluded victims![40] Before a century had elapsed, the descendants of these same Spaniards discerned in the mysteries of the Aztec religion the features, obscured and defaced, indeed, of the Jewish and Christian revelations![41] Such were the opposite conclusions of the unlettered soldier and of the scholar. A philosopher, untouched by superstition, might well doubt which of the two was the more extraordinary.

The sight of the Indian abomination seems to have kindled in the Spaniards a livelier feeling for their own religion; since on the following day they asked leave of Montezuma to convert one of the halls in their residence into a chapel, that they might celebrate the services of the Church there. The monarch, in whose bosom the feelings of resentment seem to have soon subsided, easily granted their request, and sent some of his own artisans to aid them in the work.

While it was in progress, some of the Spaniards

[40] "Todas estas mugeres," says Father Toribio, "estaban aquí sirviendo al demonio por sus propios intereses; las unas porque el Demonio las hiciese modestas," etc. Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 9.

[41] See essay on the Origin of the Mexican Civilization. *Ante.*

observed what appeared to be a door recently plastered over. It was a common rumor that Montezuma still kept the treasures of his father, King Axayacatl, in this ancient palace. The Spaniards, acquainted with this fact, felt no scruple in gratifying their curiosity by removing the plaster. As was anticipated, it concealed a door. On forcing this, they found the rumor was no exaggeration. They beheld a large hall filled with rich and beautiful stuffs, articles of curious workmanship of various kinds, gold and silver in bars and in the ore, and many jewels of value. It was the private hoard of Montezuma, the contributions, it may be, of tributary cities, and once the property of his father. "I was a young man," says Diaz, who was one of those that obtained a sight of it, "and it seemed to me as if all the riches of the world were in that room!" [42] The Spaniards, notwithstanding their elation at the discovery of this precious deposit, seem to have felt some commendable scruples as to appropriating it to their own use,—at least for the present. And Cortés, after closing up the wall as it was before, gave strict injunctions that nothing should be said of the matter, unwilling that the knowledge of its existence by his guests should reach the ears of Montezuma.

Three days sufficed to complete the chapel; and the Christians had the satisfaction to see themselves in possession of a temple where they might wor-

[42] "Y luego lo supímos entre todos los demas Capitanes, y soldados, y lo entrámos á ver muy secretamente, y como yo lo ví, digo que me admiré, é como en aquel tiempo era mancebo, y no auia visto en mi vida riquezas como aquellas, tuue por cierto, que en el mundo no deuiera auer otras tantas!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.

ship God in their own way, under the protection of the Cross and the blessed Virgin. Mass was regularly performed by the fathers Olmedo and Diaz, in the presence of the assembled army, who were most earnest and exemplary in their devotions, partly, says the chronicler above quoted, from the propriety of the thing, and partly for its edifying influence on the benighted heathen.[43]

[43] Ibid., loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

ANXIETY OF CORTÉS—SEIZURE OF MONTEZUMA—HIS TREATMENT BY THE SPANIARDS—EXECUTION OF HIS OFFICERS—MONTEZUMA IN IRONS—REFLECTIONS

1519

THE Spaniards had been now a week in Mexico. During this time they had experienced the most friendly treatment from the emperor. But the mind of Cortés was far from easy. He felt that it was quite uncertain how long this amiable temper would last. A hundred circumstances might occur to change it. Montezuma might very naturally feel the maintenance of so large a body too burdensome on his treasury. The people of the capital might become dissatisfied at the presence of so numerous an armed force within their walls. Many causes of disgust might arise betwixt the soldiers and the citizens. Indeed, it was scarcely possible that a rude, licentious soldiery, like the Spaniards, could be long kept in subjection without active employment.[1] The danger was even greater with the Tlascalans, a fierce race now brought into daily contact with the nation who held

[1] "We Spaniards," says Cortés, frankly, "are apt to be somewhat unmanageable and troublesome." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 84.

them in loathing and detestation. Rumors were already rife among the allies, whether well founded or not, of murmurs among the Mexicans, accompanied by menaces of raising the bridges.[2]

Even should the Spaniards be allowed to occupy their present quarters unmolested, it was not advancing the great object of the expedition. Cortés was not a whit nearer gaining the capital, so essential to his meditated subjugation of the country; and any day he might receive tidings that the crown, or, what he most feared, the governor of Cuba, had sent a force of superior strength to wrest from him a conquest but half achieved. Disturbed by these anxious reflections, he resolved to extricate himself from his embarrassment by one bold stroke. But he first submitted the affair to a council of the officers in whom he most confided, desirous to divide with them the responsibility of the act, and, no doubt, to interest them more heartily in its execution by making it in some measure the result of their combined judgments.

When the general had briefly stated the embarrassments of their position, the council was divided in opinion. All admitted the necessity of some instant action. One party were for retiring

[2] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83.—There is reason to doubt the truth of these stories. "Segun una carta original que tengo en mi poder firmada de las tres cabezas de la Nueva-España en donde escriben á la Magestad del Emperador Nuestro Señor (que Dios tenga en su Santo Reyno) disculpan en ella á Motecuhzoma y á los Mexicanos de esto, y de lo demas que se les argulló, que lo cierto era que fué invencion de los Tlascaltecas, y de algunos de los Españoles que veian la hora de salirse de miedo de la Ciudad, y poner en cobro innumerables riquezas que habian venido á sus manos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

secretly from the city, and getting beyond the causeways before their march could be intercepted. Another advised that it should be done openly, with the knowledge of the emperor, of whose good will they had had so many proofs. But both these measures seemed alike impolitic. A retreat under these circumstances, and so abruptly made, would have the air of a flight. It would be construed into distrust of themselves; and anything like timidity on their part would be sure not only to bring on them the Mexicans, but the contempt of their allies, who would, doubtless, join in the general cry.

As to Montezuma, what reliance could they place on the protection of a prince so recently their enemy, and who, in his altered bearing, must have taken counsel of his fears rather than his inclinations?

Even should they succeed in reaching the coast, their situation would be little better. It would be proclaiming to the world that, after all their lofty vaunts, they were unequal to the enterprise. Their only hopes of their sovereign's favor, and of pardon for their irregular proceedings, were founded on success. Hitherto, they had only made the discovery of Mexico; to retreat would be to leave conquest and the fruits of it to another. In short, to stay and to retreat seemed equally disastrous.

In his perplexity, Cortés proposed an expedient which none but the most daring spirit, in the most desperate extremity, would have conceived. This was to march to the royal palace and bring Montezuma to the Spanish quarters, by fair means if they could persuade him, by force if necessary,—

at all events, to get possession of his person.* With such a pledge, the Spaniards would be secure from the assault of the Mexicans, afraid by acts of violence to compromise the safety of their prince. If he came by his own consent, they would be deprived of all apology for doing so. As long as the emperor remained among the Spaniards, it would be easy, by allowing him a show of sovereignty, to rule in his name, until they had taken measures for securing their safety and the success of their enterprise. The idea of employing a sovereign as a tool for the government of his own kingdom, if a new one in the age of Cortés, is certainly not so in ours.[3]

A plausible pretext for the seizure of the hos-

[3] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 84.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz gives a very different report of this matter. According to him, a number of officers and soldiers, of whom he was one, suggested the capture of Montezuma to the general, who came into the plan with hesitation. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.) This is contrary to the character of Cortés, who was a man to lead, and not to be led, on such occasions. It is contrary to the general report of historians, though these, it must be confessed, are mainly built on the general's narrative. It is contrary to anterior probability; since, if the conception seems almost too desperate to have seriously entered into the head of any one man, how much more improbable is it that it should have originated with a number! Lastly, it is contrary to the positive written statement of Cortés to the emperor, publicly known and circulated, confirmed in print by his chaplain, Gomara, and all this when the thing was fresh and when the parties interested were alive to contradict it. We cannot but think that the captain here, as in the case of the burning of the ships, assumes rather more for himself and his comrades than the facts will strictly warrant; an oversight for which the lapse of half a century—to say nothing of his avowed anxiety to show up the claims of the latter—may furnish some apology.

* ["An unparalleled transaction. There is nothing like it, I believe, in the annals of the world." Helps' Spanish Conquest, ii. 351.—M.]

pitable monarch—for the most barefaced action seeks to veil itself under some show of decency—was afforded by a circumstance of which Cortés had received intelligence at Cholula.[4] He had left, as we have seen, a faithful officer, Juan de Escalante, with a hundred and fifty men, in garrison at Vera Cruz, on his departure for the capital. He had not been long absent when his lieutenant received a message from an Aztec chief named Quauhpopoca, governor of a district to the north of the Spanish settlement, declaring his desire to come in person and tender his allegiance to the Spanish authorities at Vera Cruz. He requested that four of the white men might be sent to protect him against certain unfriendly tribes through which his road lay. This was not an uncommon request, and excited no suspicion in Escalante. The four soldiers were sent; and on their arrival two of them were murdered by the false Aztec. The other two made their way back to the garrison.[5]

The commander marched at once, with fifty of his men, and several thousand Indian allies, to take vengeance on the cacique. A pitched battle followed. The allies fled from the redoubted Mexi-

[4] Even Gomara has the candor to style it a "pretext,"—*achaque*. Crónica, cap. 83.

[5] Bernal Diaz states the affair, also, differently. According to him, the Aztec governor was enforcing the payment of the customary tribute from the Totonacs, when Escalante, interfering to protect his allies, now subjects of Spain, was slain in an action with the enemy. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.) Cortés had the best means of knowing the facts, and wrote at the time. He does not usually shrink from avowing his policy, however severe, towards the natives; and I have thought it fair to give him the benefit of his own version of the story.

cans. The few Spaniards stood firm, and with the aid of their fire-arms and the blessed Virgin, who was distinctly seen hovering over their ranks in the van, they made good the field against the enemy. It cost them dear, however; since seven or eight Christians were slain, and among them the gallant Escalante himself, who died of his injuries soon after his return to the fort. The Indian prisoners captured in the battle spoke of the whole proceeding as having taken place at the instigation of Montezuma.[6]

One of the Spaniards fell into the hands of the natives, but soon after perished of his wounds. His head was cut off and sent to the Aztec emperor. It was uncommonly large and covered with hair; and, as Montezuma gazed on the ferocious features, rendered more horrible by death, he seemed to read in them the dark lineaments of the destined destroyers of his house. He turned from it with a shudder, and commanded that it should be taken from the city, and not offered at the shrine of any of his gods.

Although Cortés had received intelligence of this disaster at Cholula, he had concealed it within his own breast, or communicated it to very few only of his most trusty officers, from apprehension

[6] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 83, 84. The apparition of the Virgin was seen only by the Aztecs, who, it is true, had to make out the best case for their defeat they could to Montezuma; a suspicious circumstance, which, however, did not stagger the Spaniards. "Assuredly all of us soldiers who accompanied Cortés held the belief that the divine mercy and Our Lady the Virgin Mary were always with us, and this was the truth." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 94.

of the ill effect it might have on the spirits of the common soldiers.

The cavaliers whom Cortés now summoned to the council were men of the same mettle with their leader. Their bold, chivalrous spirits seemed to court danger for its own sake. If one or two, less adventurous, were startled by the proposal he made, they were soon overruled by the others, who, no doubt, considered that a desperate disease required as desperate a remedy.

That night Cortés was heard pacing his apartment to and fro, like a man oppressed by thought or agitated by strong emotion. He may have been ripening in his mind the daring scheme for the morrow.[7] In the morning the soldiers heard mass as usual, and Father Olmedo invoked the blessing of Heaven on their hazardous enterprise. Whatever might be the cause in which he was embarked, the heart of the Spaniard was cheered with the conviction that the saints were on his side![8]

Having asked an audience from Montezuma, which was readily granted, the general made the necessary arrangements for his enterprise. The principal part of his force was drawn up in the court-yard, and he stationed a considerable detachment in the avenues leading to the palace, to check any attempt at rescue by the populace. He ordered twenty-five or thirty of the soldiers to drop

[7] "Paseóse vn gran rato solo, i cuidadoso de aquel gran hecho, que emprendia, i que aun á él mesmo le parecia temerario, pero necesario para su intento, andando." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83.

[8] Diaz says, "All that night we spent in prayer, beseeching the Father of Mercies that he would so direct the matter that it should contribute to his holy service." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

in at the palace, as if by accident, in groups of three or four at a time, while the conference was going on with Montezuma. He selected five cavaliers, in whose courage and coolness he placed most trust, to bear him company; Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Lujo, Velasquez de Leon, and Alonso de Avila,—brilliant names in the annals of the Conquest. All were clad, as well as the common soldiers, in complete armor, a circumstance of too familiar occurrence to excite suspicion.

The little party were graciously received by the emperor, who soon, with the aid of the interpreters, became interested in a sportive conversation with the Spaniards, while he indulged his natural munificence by giving them presents of gold and jewels. He paid the Spanish general the particular compliment of offering him one of his daughters as his wife; an honor which the latter respectfully declined, on the ground that he was already accommodated with one in Cuba, and that his religion forbade a plurality.

When Cortés perceived that a sufficient number of his soldiers were assembled, he changed his playful manner, and in a serious tone briefly acquainted Montezuma with the treacherous proceedings in the *tierra caliente,* and the accusation of him as their author. The emperor listened to the charge with surprise, and disavowed the act, which he said could only have been imputed to him by his enemies. Cortés expressed his belief in his declaration, but added that, to prove it true, it would be necessary to send for Quauhpopoca and his accom-

plices, that they might be examined and dealt with according to their deserts. To this Montezuma made no objection. Taking from his wrist, to which it was attached, a precious stone, the royal signet, on which was cut the figure of the War-god,[9] he gave it to one of his nobles, with orders to show it to the Aztec governor, and require his instant presence in the capital, together with all those who had been accessory to the murder of the Spaniards. If he resisted, the officer was empowered to call in the aid of the neighboring towns to enforce the mandate.

When the messenger had gone, Cortés assured the monarch that this prompt compliance with his request convinced him of his innocence. But it was important that his own sovereign should be equally convinced of it. Nothing would promote this so much as for Montezuma to transfer his residence to the palace occupied by the Spaniards, till on the arrival of Quauhpopoca the affair could be fully investigated. Such an act of condescension would, of itself, show a personal regard for the Spaniards, incompatible with the base conduct alleged against him, and would fully absolve him from all suspicion![10]

Montezuma listened to this proposal, and the flimsy reasoning with which it was covered, with looks of profound amazement. He became pale as death; but in a moment his face flushed with

[9] According to Ixtlilxochitl, it was his own portrait. "Se quitó del brazo una rica piedra, donde está esculpido su rostro (que era lo mismo que un sello Real)." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

[10] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 86.

resentment, as, with the pride of offended dignity, he exclaimed, "When was it ever heard that a great prince, like myself, voluntarily left his own palace to become a prisoner in the hands of strangers!"

Cortés assured him he would not go as a prisoner. He would experience nothing but respectful treatment from the Spaniards, would be surrounded by his own household, and hold intercourse with his people as usual. In short, it would be but a change of residence, from one of his palaces to another, a circumstance of frequent occurrence with him. It was in vain. "If I should consent to such a degradation," he answered, "my subjects never would."[11] When further pressed, he offered to give up one of his sons and two of his daughters to remain as hostages with the Spaniards, so that he might be spared this disgrace.

Two hours passed in this fruitless discussion, till a high-mettled cavalier, Velasquez de Leon, impatient of the long delay, and seeing that the attempt, if not the deed, must ruin them, cried out, "Why do we waste words on this barbarian? We have gone too far to recede now. Let us seize him, and, if he resists, plunge our swords into his body!"[12] The fierce tone and menacing gestures with which this was uttered alarmed the monarch, who inquired

[11] "Quando Io lo consintiera, los mios no pasarian por ello." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

[12] "¿Que haze v. m. ya con tantas palabras? O le lleuemos preso, ó le darémos de estocadas, por esso tornadle á dezir, que si da vozes, ó haze alboroto, que le mataréis, porque mas vale que desta vez asseguremos nuestras vidas, ó las perdamos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

of Marina what the angry Spaniard said. The interpreter explained it in as gentle a manner as she could, beseeching him "to accompany the white men to their quarters, where he would be treated with all respect and kindness, while to refuse them would but expose himself to violence, perhaps to death." Marina, doubtless, spoke to her sovereign as she thought, and no one had better opportunity of knowing the truth than herself.

This last appeal shook the resolution of Montezuma. It was in vain that the unhappy prince looked around for sympathy or support. As his eyes wandered over the stern visages and iron forms of the Spaniards, he felt that his hour was indeed come; and, with a voice scarcely audible from emotion, he consented to accompany the strangers,—to quit the palace whither he was never more to return. Had he possessed the spirit of the first Montezuma, he would have called his guards around him, and left his life-blood on the threshold, sooner than have been dragged a dishonored captive across it. But his courage sank under circumstances. He felt he was the instrument of an irresistible Fate![13]

[13] Oviedo has some doubts whether Montezuma's conduct is to be viewed as pusillanimous or as prudent. "Al coronista le parece, segun lo que se puede colegir de esta materia, que Montezuma era, ó mui falto de ánimo, ó pusilánimo, ó mui prudente, aunque en muchas cosas, los que le viéron lo loan de mui señor y mui liberal; y en sus razonamientos mostraba ser de buen juicio." He strikes the balance, however, in favor of pusillanimity. "Un Príncipe tan grande como Montezuma no se habia de dexar incurrir en tales términos, ni consentir ser detenido de tan poco número de Españoles, ni de otra generacion alguna; mas como Dios tiene ordenado lo que ha de ser, ninguno puede huir de su juicio." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.

No sooner had the Spaniards got his consent than orders were given for the royal litter. The nobles who bore and attended it could scarcely believe their senses when they learned their master's purpose. But pride now came to Montezuma's aid, and, since he must go, he preferred that it should appear to be with his own free will. As the royal retinue, escorted by the Spaniards, marched through the street with downcast eyes and dejected mien, the people assembled in crowds, and a rumor rang among them that the emperor was carried off by force to the quarters of the white men. A tumult would have soon arisen but for the intervention of Montezuma himself, who called out to the people to disperse, as he was visiting his friends of his own accord; thus sealing his ignominy by a declaration which deprived his subjects of the only excuse for resistance.* On reaching the quarters,

* [Writers of the school of Morgan and Bandelier rightly lay great stress upon the circumstances connected with the capture of Montezuma as tending to prove that the so-called "emperor" had no real power, but was only the agent of the tribe. The Aztec system of government showed startling variations from the ordinary communal type, and in another century might have developed into a monarchical system, but it was nevertheless still a military democracy. Cortés was quartered in the Tecpan of the tribe, which Tecpan Montezuma had vacated to provide accommodations for his guests. It was not very remarkable, therefore, that the chief should return to his old quarters. There were no royal guards to defend his person. When he fell into the power of the Spaniards his influence was lost. But the people, whose chief officer he was, were in a quandary. The Spaniards had learned in their dealings with other tribes that Indians were demoralized and unable to fight when their caciques were taken. (*Cicique* was the title usually given to Montezuma in the first despatches of Cortés.) According to aboriginal customs, prisoners of war were killed, and their offices reverted to the tribe. Cortés, when he took Montezuma prisoner, captured both the man and his office. Under ordinary circumstances there could be no vacancy in the office until its holder died. We shall note later the

he sent out his nobles with similar assurances to the mob, and renewed orders to return to their homes.[14]

He was received with ostentatious respect by the Spaniards, and selected the suite of apartments which best pleased him. They were soon furnished with fine cotton tapestries, feather-work, and all the elegancies of Indian upholstery. He was attended by such of his household as he chose, his wives and his pages, and was served with his usual pomp and luxury at his meals.* He gave audience, as in his own palace, to his subjects, who were admitted to his presence, few, indeed, at a time, under the pretext of greater order and decorum. From the Spaniards themselves he met with a formal deference. No one, not even the general himself, approached him without doffing his casque and rendering the obeisance due to his rank. Nor did they ever sit in his presence, without being invited by him to do so.[15]

[14] The story of the seizure of Montezuma may be found, with the usual discrepancies in the details, in Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 84–86,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 2, 3,—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[15] "Siempre que ante él passauamos, y aunque fuesse Cortés, le quitauamos los bonetes de armas ó cascos, que siempre estauamos

enormous blunder Cortés made because of his ignorance of Aztec institutions.—M.]

* [According to Tápia, his servants brought him at each meal more than four hundred dishes of meat, game, and fish, intermingled with vegetables and fruits: "é debajo de cada plato de los que á sus servidores les parecie que él comerie, venia un braserico con lumbre; . . . siempre le traian platos nuevos en que comie, é jamas comie en cada plato mas du una vez, ni se vistie ropa mas de una vez; é lavábase el cuerpo cada dia dos veces." Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. ii.—K.]

With all this studied ceremony and show of homage, there was one circumstance which too clearly proclaimed to his people that their sovereign was a prisoner. In the front of the palace a patrol of sixty men was established, and the same number in the rear. Twenty of each corps mounted guard at once, maintaining a careful watch, day and night.[16] Another body, under command of Velasquez de Leon, was stationed in the royal antechamber. Cortés punished any departure from duty, or relaxation of vigilance, in these sentinels, with the utmost severity.[17] He felt, as indeed every Spaniard must have felt, that the escape of the emperor now would be their ruin. Yet the task of this unintermitting watch sorely added to their fatigues. "Better this dog of a king should die," cried a soldier one day, "than that we should wear out our lives in this manner." The words were uttered in the hearing of Montezuma, who gathered something of their import, and the offender was severely chastised by order of the general.[18] Such instances of disrespect, however, were very rare. Indeed, the amiable deportment of the monarch, who seemed to take pleasure in the society of his jailers, and who never allowed a favor or attention from the meanest soldier to go

armados, y él nos hazia gran mesura, y honra á todos. . . . Digo que no se sentauan Cortés, ni ningun Capitan, hasta que el Montezuma les mandaua dar sus assentaderos ricos, y les mandaua assentar." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95, 100.

[16] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 3.

[17] On one occasion, three soldiers, who left their posts without orders, were sentenced to run the gauntlet,—a punishment little short of death. Ibid., ubi supra.

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 97.

unrequited, inspired the Spaniards with as much attachment as they were capable of feeling—for a barbarian.[19]

Things were in this posture, when the arrival of Quauhpopoca from the coast was announced. He was accompanied by his son and fifteen Aztec chiefs. He had travelled all the way, borne, as became his high rank, in a litter. On entering Montezuma's presence, he threw over his dress the coarse robe of *nequen,* and made the usual humiliating acts of obeisance. The poor parade of courtly ceremony was the more striking when placed in contrast with the actual condition of the parties.

The Aztec governor was coldly received by his

[19] [The patriotic sensibilities of Señor Ramirez are somewhat disturbed by my application of the term *barbarians* to his Aztec countrymen.* This word, with the corresponding epithet of *savages,* forms the key, he seems to think, to my description of the ancient Mexicans. "Regarded from this point of view," he says, "the astounding examples of heroism and self-devotion so rarely met with in the history of the world are interpreted not as a voluntary sacrifice inspired by the holy love of country and of freedom, but as the effect of a brutish hatred and stupid ferocity." There may be some foundation for these strictures, though somewhat too highly colored. And one cannot deny that, as he reflects on the progress made by the Aztecs in the knowledge of the useful arts, and, indeed, to a certain extent, of science, he must admit their claim to a higher place in the scale of civilization than that occupied by barbarians,—to one, in truth, occupied by the semi-civilized races of China and Hindostan. But there is another side of the picture, not presented by the Eastern nations, in those loathsome abominations which degraded the Aztec character to a level with the lowest stages of humanity, and makes even the term *barbarian* inadequate to express the ferocity of his nature.]

* [This sensibility is the more natural that Señor Ramirez claims descent not from the conquering but from the conquered race,—a fact which may also account for his rigorous judgments on the acts and character of Cortés.—K.]

master, who referred the affair (had he the power to do otherwise?) to the examination of Cortés. It was, doubtless, conducted in a sufficiently summary manner. To the general's query, whether the cacique was the subject of Montezuma, he replied, "And what other sovereign could I serve?" implying that his sway was universal.[20] He did not deny his share in the transaction, nor did he seek to shelter himself under the royal authority till sentence of death was passed on him and his followers, when they all laid the blame of their proceedings on Montezuma.[21] They were condemned to be burnt alive in the area before the palace. The funeral piles were made of heaps of arrows, javelins, and other weapons, drawn by the emperor's permission from the arsenals round the great *teocalli,* where they had been stored to supply means of defence in times of civic tumult or insurrection. By this politic precaution Cortés proposed to remove a ready means of annoyance in case of hostilities with the citizens.

To crown the whole of these extraordinary proceedings, Cortés, while preparations for the execution were going on, entered the emperor's apartment, attended by a soldier bearing fetters in his

[20] "Y despues que confesáron haber muerto los Españoles, les hice interrogar si ellos eran Vasallos de Muteczuma? Y el dicho Qualpopoca respondió, que si habia otro Señor, de quien pudiesse serlo? casi diciendo, que no habia otro, y que si eran." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 87.

[21] "E assimismo les pregunte, si lo que allí se habia hecho si habia sido por su mandado? y dijéron que no, aunque despues, al tiempo que en ellos se executó la sentencia, que fuessen quemados, todos á una voz dijéron, que era verdad que el dicho Muteczuma se lo habia embiado á mandar, y que por su mandado lo habian hecho." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, loc. cit.

hands. With a severe aspect, he charged the monarch with being the original contriver of the violence offered to the Spaniards, as was now proved by the declaration of his own instruments. Such a crime, which merited death in a subject, could not be atoned for, even by a sovereign, without some punishment. So saying, he ordered the soldier to fasten the fetters on Montezuma's ankles. He coolly waited till it was done, then, turning his back on the monarch, quitted the room.

Montezuma was speechless under the infliction of this last insult. He was like one struck down by a heavy blow, that deprives him of all his faculties. He offered no resistance. But, though he spoke not a word, low, ill-suppressed moans, from time to time, intimated the anguish of his spirit. His attendants, bathed in tears, offered him their consolations. They tenderly held his feet in their arms, and endeavored, by inserting their shawls and mantles, to relieve them from the pressure of the iron. But they could not reach the iron which had penetrated into his soul. He felt that he was no more a king.

Meanwhile, the execution of the dreadful doom was going forward. The whole Spanish force was under arms, to check any interruption that might be offered by the Mexicans. But none was attempted. The populace gazed in silent wonder, regarding it as the sentence of the emperor. The manner of the execution, too, excited less surprise, from their familiarity with similar spectacles, aggravated, indeed, by additional horrors, in their own diabolical sacrifices. The Aztec lord and his

companions, bound hand and foot to the blazing piles, submitted without a cry or a complaint to their terrible fate. Passive fortitude is the virtue of the Indian warrior; and it was the glory of the Aztec, as of the other races on the North American continent, to show how the spirit of the brave man may triumph over torture and the agonies of death.

When the dismal tragedy was ended, Cortés reentered Montezuma's apartment. Kneeling down, he unclasped his shackles with his own hand, expressing at the same time his regret that so disagreeable a duty as that of subjecting him to such a punishment had been imposed on him. This last indignity had entirely crushed the spirit of Montezuma; and the monarch whose frown, but a week since, would have made the nations of Anahuac tremble to their remotest borders, was now craven enough to thank his deliverer for his freedom, as for a great and unmerited boon![22]

Not long after, the Spanish general, conceiving that his royal captive was sufficiently humbled, expressed his willingness that he should return, if he inclined, to his own palace. Montezuma declined it; alleging, it is said, that his nobles had more than once importuned him to resent his injuries by tak-

[22] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 89.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.—One may doubt whether pity or contempt predominates in Martyr's notice of this event. "Infelix tunc Muteczuma re adeo noua perculsus, formidine repletur, decidit animo, neque iam erigere caput audèt, aut suorum auxilia implorare. Ille vero pœnam se meruisse fassus est, vti agnus mitis. Æquo animo pati videtur has regulas grammaticalibus duriores, imberbibus pueris dictatas, omnia placide fert, ne seditio ciuium et procerum oriatur." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

ing arms against the Spaniards, and that, were he in the midst of them, it would be difficult to avoid it, or to save his capital from bloodshed and anarchy.[23] The reason did honor to his heart, if it was the one which influenced him. It is probable that he did not care to trust his safety to those haughty and ferocious chieftains, who had witnessed the degradation of their master, and must despise his pusillanimity, as a thing unprecedented in an Aztec monarch. It is also said that, when Marina conveyed to him the permission of Cortés, the other interpreter, Aguilar, gave him to understand the Spanish officers never would consent that he should avail himself of it.[24]

Whatever were his reasons, it is certain that he declined the offer; and the general, in a well-feigned or real ecstasy, embraced him, declaring "that he loved him as a brother, and that every Spaniard would be zealously devoted to his interests, since he had shown himself so mindful of theirs!" Honeyed words, "which," says the shrewd old chronicler who was present, "Montezuma was wise enough to know the worth of."

The events recorded in this chapter are certainly some of the most extraordinary on the page of history. That a small body of men, like the Spaniards, should have entered the palace of a mighty prince, have seized his person in the midst of his vassals, have borne him off a captive to their quarters,—that they should have put to an ignominious death before his face his high officers, for execut-

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 18.

[24] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

ing, probably, his own commands, and have crowned the whole by putting the monarch in irons like a common malefactor,—that this should have been done, not to a drivelling dotard in the decay of his fortunes, but to a proud monarch in the plenitude of his power, in the very heart of his capital, surrounded by thousands and tens of thousands, who trembled at his nod and would have poured out their blood like water in his defence,—that all this should have been done by a mere handful of adventurers, is a thing too extravagant, altogether too improbable, for the pages of romance! It is, nevertheless, literally true. Yet we shall not be prepared to acquiesce in the judgments of contemporaries who regarded these acts with admiration. We may well distrust any grounds on which it is attempted to justify the kidnapping of a friendly sovereign,—by those very persons, too, who were reaping the full benefit of his favors.

To view the matter differently, we must take the position of the Conquerors and assume with them the original right of conquest. Regarded from this point of view, many difficulties vanish. If conquest were a duty, whatever was necessary to effect it was right also. Right and expedient become convertible terms. And it can hardly be denied that the capture of the monarch was expedient, if the Spaniards would maintain their hold on the empire.[25]

[25] Archbishop Lorenzana, as late as the close of the last century, finds good Scripture warrant for the proceeding of the Spaniards. "Fué grande prudencia, y Arte militar haber asegurado á el Empe-

The execution of the Aztec governor suggests other considerations. If he were really guilty of the perfidious act imputed to him by Cortés, and if Montezuma disavowed it, the governor deserved death, and the general was justified by the law of nations in inflicting it.[26] It is by no means so clear, however, why he should have involved so many in this sentence; most, perhaps all, of whom must have acted under his authority. The cruel manner of the death will less startle those who are familiar with the established penal codes in most civilized nations in the sixteenth century.

But, if the governor deserved death, what pretence was there for the outrage on the person of Montezuma? If the former was guilty, the latter surely was not. But, if the cacique only acted in obedience to orders, the responsibility was transferred to the sovereign who gave the orders. They could not both stand in the same category.

It is vain, however, to reason on the matter on any abstract principles of right and wrong, or to suppose that the Conquerors troubled themselves with the refinements of casuistry. Their standard of right and wrong, in reference to the natives, was a very simple one. Despising them as an outlawed race, without God in the world, they, in common

rador, porque sino quedaban expuestos Hernan Cortés, y sus soldados á perecer á traycion, y teniendo seguro á el Emperador se aseguraba á sí mismo, pues los Españoles no se confian ligeramente: Jonathas fué muerto, y sorprendido por haberse confiado de Triphon." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 84, nota.

[26] See Puffendorf, De Jure Naturæ et Gentium, lib. 8, cap. 6, sec. 10.—Vattel, Law of Nations, book 3, chap. 8, sec. 141.

with their age, held it to be their "mission" (to borrow the cant phrase of our own day) to conquer and to convert. The measures they adopted certainly facilitated the first great work of conquest. By the execution of the caciques they struck terror not only into the capital, but throughout the country. It proclaimed that not a hair of a Spaniard was to be touched with impunity! By rendering Montezuma contemptible in his own eyes and those of his subjects, Cortés deprived him of the support of his people and forced him to lean on the arm of the stranger. It was a politic proceeding,—to which few men could have been equal who had a touch of humanity in their natures.

A good criterion of the moral sense of the actors in these events is afforded by the reflections of Bernal Diaz, made some fifty years, it will be remembered, after the events themselves, when the fire of youth had become extinct, and the eye, glancing back through the vista of half a century, might be supposed to be unclouded by the passions and prejudices which throw their mist over the present. "Now that I am an old man," says the veteran, "I often entertain myself with calling to mind the heroical deeds of early days, till they are as fresh as the events of yesterday. I think of the seizure of the Indian monarch, his confinement in irons, and the execution of his officers, till all these things seem actually passing before me. And, as I ponder on our exploits, I feel that it was not of ourselves that we performed them, but that it was the providence of God which guided us. Much

food is there here for meditation!" [27] There is so, indeed, and for a meditation not unpleasing, as we reflect on the advance, in speculative morality at least, which the nineteenth century has made over the sixteenth. But should not the consciousness of this teach us charity? Should it not make us the more distrustful of applying the standard of the present to measure the actions of the past?

[27] "Osar quemar sus Capitanes delante de sus Palacios, y echalle grillos entre tanto que se hazia la Justicia, que muchas vezes aora que soy viejo me paro á considerar las cosas heroicas que en aquel tiempo passámos, que me parece las veo presentes: Y digo que nuestros hechos, que no los haziamos nosotros, sino que venian todos encaminados por Dios. . . . Porque ay mucho que ponderar en ello." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

CHAPTER IV

MONTEZUMA'S DEPORTMENT—HIS LIFE IN THE SPANISH QUARTERS—MEDITATED INSURRECTION—LORD OF TEZCUCO SEIZED—FURTHER MEASURES OF CORTÉS

1520

THE settlement of La Villa Rica de Vera Cruz was of the last importance to the Spaniards. It was the port by which they were to communicate with Spain; the strong post on which they were to retreat in case of disaster, and which was to bridle their enemies and give security to their allies; the *point d'appui* for all their operations in the country. It was of great moment, therefore, that the care of it should be intrusted to proper hands.

A cavalier, named Alonso de Grado, had been sent by Cortés to take the place made vacant by the death of Escalante. He was a person of greater repute in civil than military matters, and would be more likely, it was thought, to maintain peaceful relations with the natives than a person of more belligerent spirit. Cortés made—what was rare with him—a bad choice. He soon received such accounts of troubles in the settlement from the exactions and negligence of the new governor, that he resolved to supersede him.

He now gave the command to Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young cavalier, who had displayed, through the whole campaign, singular intrepidity united with sagacity and discretion; while the good humor with which he bore every privation, and his affable manners, made him a favorite with all, privates as well as officers. Sandoval accordingly left the camp for the coast. Cortés did not mistake his man a second time.

Notwithstanding the actual control exercised by the Spaniards through their royal captive, Cortés felt some uneasiness when he reflected that it was in the power of the Indians at any time to cut off his communications with the surrounding country and hold him a prisoner in the capital. He proposed, therefore, to build two vessels of sufficient size to transport his forces across the lake, and thus to render himself independent of the causeways. Montezuma was pleased with the idea of seeing those wonderful "water-houses," of which he had heard so much, and readily gave permission to have the timber in the royal forests felled for the purpose. The work was placed under the direction of Martin Lopez, an experienced ship-builder. Orders were also given to Sandoval to send up from the coast a supply of cordage, sails, iron, and other necessary materials, which had been judiciously saved on the destruction of the fleet.[1]

The Aztec emperor, meanwhile, was passing his days in the Spanish quarters in no very different manner from what he had been accustomed to in his own palace. His keepers were too well aware

[1] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 96.

of the value of their prize, not to do everything which could make his captivity comfortable and disguise it from himself. But the chain will gall, though wreathed with roses. After Montezuma's breakfast, which was a light meal of fruits or vegetables, Cortés or some of his officers usually waited on him, to learn if he had any commands for them. He then devoted some time to business. He gave audience to those of his subjects who had petitions to prefer or suits to settle. The statement of the party was drawn up on the hieroglyphic scrolls, which were submitted to a number of counsellors or judges, who assisted him with their advice on these occasions. Envoys from foreign states or his own remote provinces and cities were also admitted, and the Spaniards were careful that the same precise and punctilious etiquette should be maintained towards the royal puppet as when in the plenitude of his authority.

After business was despatched, Montezuma often amused himself with seeing the Castilian troops go through their military exercises. He, too, had been a soldier, and in his prouder days had led armies in the field. It was very natural he should take an interest in the novel display of European tactics and discipline. At other times he would challenge Cortés or his officers to play at some of the national games. A favorite one was called *totoloque,* played with golden balls aimed at a target or mark of the same metal. Montezuma usually staked something of value,—precious stones or ingots of gold. He lost with good hu-

mor; indeed, it was of little consequence whether he won or lost, since he generally gave away his winnings to his attendants.[2] He had, in truth, a most munificent spirit. His enemies accused him of avarice. But, if he were avaricious, it could have been only that he might have the more to give away.

Each of the Spaniards had several Mexicans, male and female, who attended to his cooking and various other personal offices. Cortés, considering that the maintenance of this host of menials was a heavy tax on the royal exchequer, ordered them to be dismissed, excepting one to be retained for each soldier. Montezuma, on learning this, pleasantly remonstrated with the general on his careful economy, as unbecoming a royal establishment, and, countermanding the order, caused additional accommodation to be provided for the attendants, and their pay to be doubled.

On another occasion, a soldier purloined some trinkets of gold from the treasure kept in the chamber, which, since Montezuma's arrival in the Spanish quarters, had been reopened. Cortés would have punished the man for the theft, but the emperor, interfering, said to him, " Your countrymen are welcome to the gold and other articles, if you will but spare those belonging to the gods." Some of the soldiers, making the most of his permission, carried off several hundred loads of fine cotton to their quarters. When this was represented to Montezuma, he only replied,

[2] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 97.

"What I have once given I never take back again." [3]

While thus indifferent to his treasures, he was keenly sensitive to personal slight or insult. When a common soldier once spoke to him angrily, the tears came into the monarch's eyes, as it made him feel the true character of his impotent condition. Cortés, on becoming acquainted with it, was so much incensed that he ordered the soldier to be hanged, but, on Montezuma's intercession, commuted this severe sentence for a flogging. The general was not willing that any one but himself should treat his royal captive with indignity. Montezuma was desired to procure a further mitigation of the punishment. But he refused, saying "that, if a similar insult had been offered by any one of his subjects to Malinche, he would have resented it in like manner." [4]

Such instances of disrespect were very rare. Montezuma's amiable and inoffensive manners, together with his liberality, the most popular of virtues with the vulgar, made him generally beloved by the Spaniards.[5] The arrogance for which he had been so distinguished in his prosperous days deserted him in his fallen fortunes. His character in captivity seems to have undergone something of that change which takes place in the wild animals

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 84.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 4.

[4] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 5.

[5] "En esto era tan bien mirado, que todos le queriamos con gran amor, porque verdaderamente era gran señor en todas las cosas que le viamos hazer." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 100.

of the forest when caged within the walls of the menagerie.

The Indian monarch knew the name of every man in the army, and was careful to discriminate his proper rank.[6] For some he showed a strong partiality. He obtained from the general a favorite page, named Orteguilla, who, being in constant attendance on his person, soon learned enough of the Mexican language to be of use to his countrymen. Montezuma took great pleasure, also, in the society of Velasquez de Leon, the captain of his guard, and Pedro de Alvarado, *Tonatiuh,* or "the Sun," as he was called by the Aztecs, from his yellow hair and sunny countenance. The sunshine, as events afterwards showed, could sometimes be the prelude to a terrible tempest.

Notwithstanding the care taken to cheat him of the tedium of captivity, the royal prisoner cast a wistful glance, now and then, beyond the walls of his residence to the ancient haunts of business or pleasure. He intimated a desire to offer up his devotions at the great temple, where he was once so constant in his worship. The suggestion startled Cortés. It was too reasonable, however, for him to object to it without wholly discarding the appearances which he was desirous to maintain. But he secured Montezuma's return by sending an escort with him of a hundred and fifty soldiers under the same resolute cavaliers who had aided in his seizure. He told him, also, that in case of any at-

[6] "Y él bien conocia á todos, y sabia nuestros nombres, y aun calidades, y era tan bueno que á todos nos daua joyas, á otros mantas é Indias hermosas." Ibid., cap. 97.

tempt to escape his life would instantly pay the forfeit. Thus guarded, the Indian prince visited the *teocalli,* where he was received with the usual state, and, after performing his devotions, he returned again to his quarters.[7]

It may well be believed that the Spaniards did not neglect the opportunity afforded by his residence with them, of instilling into him some notions of the Christian doctrine. Fathers Diaz and Olmedo exhausted all their battery of logic and persuasion, to shake his faith in his idols, but in vain. He, indeed, paid a most edifying attention, which gave promise of better things. But the conferences always closed with the declaration that " the God of the Christians was good, but the gods of his own country were the true gods for him." [8] It is said, however, they extorted a promise from him that he would take part in no more human sacrifices. Yet such sacrifices were of daily occurrence in the great temples of the capital; and the people were too blindly attached to their bloody abominations for the Spaniards to deem it safe, for the present at least, openly to interfere.

Montezuma showed, also, an inclination to engage in the pleasures of the chase, of which he once was immoderately fond. He had large forests reserved for the purpose on the other side of the lake. As the Spanish brigantines were now completed,

[7] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 98.

[8] According to Solís, the Devil closed his heart against these good men; though, in the historian's opinion, there is no evidence that this evil counsellor actually appeared and conversed with Montezuma after the Spaniards had displayed the Cross in Mexico. Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 20.

Cortés proposed to transport him and his suite across the water in them. They were of a good size, strongly built. The largest was mounted with four falconets, or small guns. It was protected by a gayly-colored awning stretched over the deck, and the royal ensign of Castile floated proudly from the mast. On board of this vessel, Montezuma, delighted with the opportunity of witnessing the nautical skill of the white men, embarked with a train of Aztec nobles and a numerous guard of Spaniards. A fresh breeze played on the waters, and the vessel soon left behind it the swarms of light pirogues which darkened their surface. She seemed like a thing of life in the eyes of the astonished natives, who saw her, as if disdaining human agency, sweeping by with snowy pinions as if on the wings of the wind, while the thunders from her sides, now for the first time breaking on the silence of this "inland sea," showed that the beautiful phantom was clothed in terror.[9]

The royal chase was well stocked with game; some of which the emperor shot with arrows, and others were driven by the numerous attendants into nets.[10] In these woodland exercises, while he ranged over his wild domain, Montezuma seemed to enjoy again the sweets of liberty. It was but

[9] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 99.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 88.

[10] He sometimes killed his game with a tube, a sort of air-gun, through which he blew little balls at birds and rabbits. "La Caça á que Moteçuma iba por la Laguna, era á tirar á Pájaros, á Conejos, con Cerbatana, de la qual era diestro." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 4.

the shadow of liberty, however; as in his quarters, at home, he enjoyed but the shadow of royalty. At home or abroad, the eye of the Spaniard was always upon him.

But, while resigned himself without a struggle to his inglorious fate, there were others who looked on it with very different emotions. Among them was his nephew Cacama, lord of Tezcuco, a young man not more than twenty-five years of age, but who enjoyed great consideration from his high personal qualities, especially his intrepidity of character. He was the same prince who had been sent by Montezemua to welcome the Spaniards on their entrance into the Valley; and, when the question of their reception was first debated in the council, he had advised to admit them honorably as ambassadors of a foreign prince, and, if they should prove different from what they pretended, it would be time enough then to take up arms against them. That time, he thought, had now come.

In a former part of this work, the reader has been made acquainted with the ancient history of the Acolhuan or Tezcucan monarchy, once the proud rival of the Aztec in power, and greatly its superior in civilization.[11] Under its last sovereign, Nezahualpilli, its territory is said to have been grievously clipped by the insidious practices of Montezuma, who fomented dissensions and insubordination among his subjects. On the death of the Tezcucan prince, the succession was contested, and a bloody war ensued between his eldest son,

[11] *Ante*, book I. chap. 6.

Cacama, and an ambitious younger brother, Ixtlilxochitl. This was followed by a partition of the kingdom, in which the latter chieftain held the mountain districts north of the capital, leaving the residue to Cacama. Though shorn of a large part of his hereditary domain, the city was itself so important that the lord of Tezcuco still held a high rank among the petty princes of the Valley. His capital, at the time of the Conquest, contained, according to Cortés, a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants.[12] It was embellished with noble buildings, rivalling those of Mexico itself, and the ruins still to be met with on its ancient site attest that it was once the abode of princes.[13]

The young Tezcucan chief beheld with indignation and no slight contempt the abject condition

[12] "E llámase esta Ciudad Tezcuco, y será de hasta treinta mil Vecinos." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 94.) According to the licentiate Zuazo, double that number,—*sesenta mil Vecinos*. (Carta, MS.) Scarcely probable, as Mexico had no more. Toribio speaks of it as covering a league one way by six another! (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) This must include the environs to a considerable extent. The language of the old chroniclers is not the most precise.

[13] A description of the capital in its glory is thus given by an eyewitness. "Esta Ciudad era la segunda cosa principal de la tierra, y así habia en Tezcuco muy grandes edificios de templos del Demonio, y muy gentiles casas y aposentos de Señores, entre los cuales, fué muy cosa de ver la casa del Señor principal, así la vieja con su huerta cercada de mas de mil cedros muy grandes y muy hermosos, de los cuales hoy dia están los mas en pie, aunque la casa está asolada, otra casa tenia que se podia aposentar en ella un egército, con muchos jardines, y un muy grande estanque, que por debajo de tierra solian entrar á él con barcas." (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) The last relics of this palace were employed in the fortifications of the city in the revolutionary war of 1810. (Ixtlilxochitl, Venida de los Esp., p. 78, nota.) Tezcuco is now an insignificant little place, with a population of a few thousand inhabitants. Its architectural remains, as still to be discerned, seem to have made a stronger impression on Mr. Bullock than on most travellers. Six Months in Mexico, chap. 27.

of his uncle. He endeavored to rouse him to manly exertion, but in vain. He then set about forming a league with several of the neighboring caciques to rescue his kinsman and to break the detested yoke of the strangers. He called on the lord of Iztapalapan, Montezuma's brother, the lord of Tlacopan, and some others of most authority, all of whom entered heartily into his views. He then urged the Aztec nobles to join them; but they expressed an unwillingness to take any step not first sanctioned by the emperor.[14] They entertained, undoubtedly, a profound reverence for their master; but it seems probable that jealousy of the personal views of Cacama had its influence on their determination. Whatever were their motives, it is certain that by this refusal they relinquished the best opportunity ever presented for retrieving their sovereign's independence and their own.

These intrigues could not be conducted so secretly as not to reach the ears of Cortés, who, with his characteristic promptness, would have marched at once on Tezcuco and trodden out the spark of "rebellion"[15] before it had time to burst into a

[14] "Cacama reprehendió asperamente á la Nobleza Mexicana porque consentia hacer semejantes desacatos á quatro Estrangeros y que no les mataban; se escusaban con decirles les iban á la mano y no les consentian tomar las Armas para libertarlo, y tomar sí una tan gran deshonra como era la que los Estrangeros les habian hecho en prender á su señor, y quemar á Quauhpopocatzin, los demas sus Hijos y Deudos sin culpa, con las Armas y Municion que tenian para la defenza y guarda de la ciudad, y de su autoridad tomar para sí los tesoros del Rey, y de los Dioses, y otras libertades y desvergüenzas que cada dia pasaban, y aunque todo esto vehian lo disimulaban por no enojar á Motecuhzoma que tan amigo y casado estaba con ellos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 86.

[15] It is the language of Cortés. "Y este señor *se rebeló,* assí contra el servicio de Vuestra Alteza, á quien se habia ofrecido, como contra

flame. But from this he was dissuaded by Montezuma, who represented that Cacama was a man of resolution, backed by a powerful force, and not to be put down without a desperate struggle. He consented, therefore, to negotiate, and sent a message of amicable expostulation to the cacique. He received a haughty answer in return. Cortés rejoined in a more menacing tone, asserting the supremacy of his own sovereign, the emperor of Castile. To this Cacama replied, "He acknowledged no such authority; he knew nothing of the Spanish sovereign or his people, nor did he wish to know anything of them." [16] Montezuma was not more successful in his application to Cacama to come to Mexico and allow him to mediate his differences with the Spaniards, with whom he assured the prince he was residing as a friend. But the young lord of Tezcuco was not to be so duped. He understood the position of his uncle, and replied "that when he did visit his capital it would be to rescue it, as well as the emperor himself, and their common gods, from bondage. He should come, not with his hand in his bosom, but on his sword,—to drive out the detested strangers who had brought such dishonor on their country!" [17]

el dicho Muteczuma." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 95.—Voltaire, with his quick eye for the ridiculous, notices this arrogance in his tragedy of Alzire:

> "Tu vois de ces tyrans la fureur despotique:
> Ils pensent que pour eux le Ciel fit l'Amérique,
> Qu'ils en sont nés les Rois; et Zamore à leurs yeux,
> Tout souverain qu'il fut, n'est qu'un séditieux."
>
> ALZIRE, act 4, sc. 3.

[16] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 91.

[17] "I que para reparar la Religion, i restituir los Dioses, guardar el Reino, cobrar la fama, i libertad á él, i á México, iria de mui buena

Cortés, incensed at this tone of defiance, would again have put himself in motion to punish it, but Montezuma interposed with his more politic arts. He had several of the Tezcucan nobles, he said, in his pay;[18] and it would be easy, through their means, to secure Cacama's person, and thus break up the confederacy, at once, without bloodshed. The maintaining of a corps of stipendiaries in the courts of neighboring princes was a refinement which showed that the Western barbarian understood the science of political intrigue as well as some of his royal brethren on the other side of the water.

By the contrivance of these faithless nobles, Cacama was induced to hold a conference, relative to the proposed invasion, in a villa which overhung the Tezcucan lake, not far from his capital. Like most of the principal edifices, it was raised so as to admit the entrance of boats beneath it. In the midst of the conference, Cacama was seized by the conspirators, hurried on board a bark in readiness for the purpose, and transported to Mexico. When brought into Montezuma's presence, the high-spirited chief abated nothing of his proud and lofty bearing. He taxed his uncle with his perfidy, and a pusillanimity so unworthy of his former character and of the royal house from which he was descended. By the emperor he was referred

gana, mas no las manos en el seno, sino en la Espada, para matar los Españoles, que tanta mengua, i afrenta havian hecho á la Nacion de Culhúa." Ibid., cap. 91.

[18] "Pero que él tenia en su Tierra de el dicho Cacamazin muchas Personas Principales, que vivian con él, y les daba su salario." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 95.

to Cortés, who, holding royalty but cheap in an Indian prince, put him in fetters.[19]

There was at this time in Mexico a brother of Cacama, a stripling much younger than himself. At the instigation of Cortés, Montezuma, pretending that his nephew had forfeited the sovereignty by his late *rebellion,* declared him to be deposed, and appointed Cuicuitzca in his place. The Aztec sovereigns had always been allowed a paramount authority in questions relating to the succession. But this was a most unwarrantable exercise of it. The Tezcucans acquiesced, however, with a ready ductility, which showed their allegiance hung but lightly on them, or, what is more probable, that they were greatly in awe of the Spaniards; and the new prince was welcomed with acclamations to his capital.[20]

Cortés still wanted to get into his hands the other chiefs who had entered into the confederacy with Cacama. This was no difficult matter. Montezuma's authority was absolute, everywhere but in his own palace. By his command, the caciques

[19] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 95, 96.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 8.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 86. —The latter author dismisses the capture of Cacama with the comfortable reflection "that it saved the Spaniards much embarrassment, and greatly facilitated the introduction of the Catholic faith."

[20] Cortés calls the name of this prince Cucuzca. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 96.) In the orthography of Aztec words, the general was governed by his ear, and was wrong nine times out of ten.—Bustamante, in his catalogue of Tezcucan monarchs, omits him altogether. He probably regards him as an intruder, who had no claim to be ranked among the rightful sovereigns of the land. (Galería de antiguos Príncipes (Puebla, 1821), p. 21.) Sahagun has, in like manner, struck his name from the royal roll of Tezcuco. Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 3.

were seized, each in his own city, and brought in chains to Mexico, where Cortés placed them in strict confinement with their leader.[21]

He had now triumphed over all his enemies. He had set his foot on the necks of princes; and the great chief of the Aztec empire was but a convenient tool in his hands for accomplishing his purposes. His first use of this power was to ascertain the actual resources of the monarchy. He sent several parties of Spaniards, guided by the natives, to explore the regions where gold was obtained. It was gleaned mostly from the beds of rivers, several hundred miles from the capital.

His next object was to learn if there existed any good natural harbor for shipping on the Atlantic coast, as the road of Vera Cruz left no protection against the tempests that at certain seasons swept over these seas. Montezuma showed him a chart on which the shores of the Mexican Gulf were laid down with tolerable accuracy.[22] Cortés, after carefully inspecting it, sent a commission, consisting of ten Spaniards, several of them pilots, and some Aztecs, who descended to Vera Cruz and made a careful survey of the coast for nearly sixty leagues south of that settlement, as far as the great river Coatzacualco, which seemed to offer the best —indeed, the only—accommodations for a safe

[21] The exceeding lenity of the Spanish commander, on this occasion, excited general admiration, if we are to credit Solís, throughout the Aztec empire! "Tuvo notable aplauso en todo el imperio este género de castigo sin sangre, que se atribuyó al superior juicio de los Españoles, porque no esperaban de Motezuma semejante moderacion." Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 2.

[22] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 91.

and suitable harbor. A spot was selected as the site of a fortified post, and the general sent a detachment of a hundred and fifty men under Velasquez de Leon to plant a colony there.

He also obtained a grant of an extensive tract of land in the fruitful province of Oaxaca, where he proposed to lay out a plantation for the crown. He stocked it with the different kinds of domesticated animals peculiar to the country, and with such indigenous grains and plants as would afford the best articles for export. He soon had the estate under such cultivation that he assured his master, the emperor Charles the Fifth, it was worth twenty thousand ounces of gold.[23]

[23] "Damus quæ dant," says Martyr, briefly, in reference to this valuation. (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.) Cortés notices the reports made by his people, of large and beautiful edifices in the province of Oaxaca. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 89.) It is here, also, that some of the most elaborate specimens of Indian architecture are still to be seen, in the ruins of Mitla.

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